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Next Generation Magazine

83 DREAMCAST GAMES PREVIEWED

42 PAGES OF DREAMCAST COVERAGE

ACTUAL SCREENSHOT from Midway's Ready 2 Rumble

24 new games played, beaten, and rated

PSX: Driver, R-Type Delta, Star Ocean, Centipede
N64: Duke Nukem
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Revolutionary times demand a Revolutionary magazine

We know who you are. You're a dedicated gamer who hungers for knowledge of the games and systems of today and tomorrow. You're interested in the very best the gaming world has to offer: the unique, the experimental — the cutting edge. You want the first word on the new issues and the last word on the old. You have sophisticated tastes, have been playing for longer than most, and know what makes a game great.

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Welcome to

➡ NextGen

Next Generation Magazine

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Next Generation Magazine

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the games,
the new hardware,
and a few surprises

→Alphas

The games you'll be playing over the next year

→Special

Dreamcast arrives

Your comprehensive
guide to the most ambitious
console launch in gaming
history, covering more than
80 games. How does
Dreamcast measure up?

Yuji Naka and
the Sonic team on
Dreamcast, hedgehogs,

09/99

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Welcome to the new **Next Generation**. With the dawn of the next generation of systems, it made sense to us to change things here — namely the way everything looks on every page! What hasn't changed is our editorial mission — to deliver the most hardcore coverage of video and computer games on the planet. The new design (the result of hundreds of hours of work by our crack Art Directors, Mike Wilmoth and Lisa Childo) enables us to deliver that coverage better than ever. We'll be tweaking things over the next month or so, and your feedback is crucial. Get in touch and let us know what you think at ngonline@imaginemedia.com.

This issue coincides with Sega's release of Dreamcast. Should you buy? Check out our massive feature on the system for the answer. I've made up my mind — like the rest of the NG staff, my pre-order is in. I'll buy a PSX 2 and Dolphin, too, but if you're interested in the most advanced games, Dreamcast is it. Until PSX 2 ships in Japan, anyway . .

Later,

Chris Charla

▶ Finals
So many games, so little time

▶ Ending
All good things must come to and end, but at least you know we'll be back soon

BURN WATER.

"HYDRO THUNDER IS ABOUT SPEED AND
EASE OF PLAY, RADICAL STYLE AND
SPARKLING GRAPHICS."
GAMER'S REPUBLIC AUGUST '99

"HYDRO THUNDER IS A THRILL-A-
SECOND EXPERIENCE FROM BEGIN-
NING TO END. THE GAME IS INCREDI-
BLY FAST AND FLUID AND THE TRACK
DESIGNS ARE TO DIE FOR..."
IGN DREAMCAST JUNE '99

"...A MIX OF DEATH-DEFYING LEAPS,
TIGHT RACING ACTION, AND THRILL-A-
MINUTE TURNS AND BURNS."
GAMEPRO JUNE '99

→News

■ **WEENIE DREAMIN'**

The battle begins

Sega gets ready to fight Sony on the front lines: the nation's youth

→ No, these people aren't all in line to buy Dreamcasts. They're actually gathered for L.A. alternative station KROQ's "Weenie Roast" music festival. In its quest to give Dreamcast the same kind of "cool" cachet that PlayStation had when it launched, Sega is wasting no time sponsoring events and maintaining a presence anywhere hip youth (marketers today call them "Gen-Y") are found.

While the Dreamcast booth was filled with people playing games like *Sonic* and *House of the Dead 2*, so were the tie-die huts, so it was hard to tell if Sega's marketing efforts were paying off.

For a better way to tell whether or not Dreamcast will succeed, see our comprehensive review of the system in this issue, which, along with 83 previews and tons more Dreamcast information, starts on page 59.

PlayStation 2:
The latest news

Good news, bad news, lots of brews at San Mateo, Calif., developers' conference

➡ While Sega was busy showing off its Dreamcast to consumers at the KROQ Weenie Roast in Los Angeles, the cream of the U.S. development crop was crammed into meeting rooms in the San Mateo, Calif, Marriott, attending SCEA's first developers' conference for PlayStation 2.

Unfortunately, there was no hands-on access to kits by the excited attendees, since development kits are still delayed. While Sony acknowledged that some developers are already working on incomplete kits, problems with the sound chip — not with the production of the Emotion Engine CPU, as many had speculated — in the system is holding back the bulk of the shipments in the U.S. Whether the sound chip development is merely delayed or is being redone from scratch wasn't clear, but sound is the one area that Sony has glanced over in its previous technical demonstrations of the system.

Sony promised that kits would be available "soon." Unless something is seriously wrong, by the time you read this, developers in the U.S. should have kits, although top prior-

> ## By the time you read this, developers in the U.S. should have PSX 2 development kits

ity remains with developers in Japan, where, according to SCEI boss Ken Kutaragi, production of Emotion Engines has already started, and assembly of consoles is slated to begin in October (meaning, of course, that a 1999 launch is entirely feasible in Japan).

That was the bad news. The good news is that, in fact, PlayStation 2 seems as powerful spacious as it did in the tech demos. The power of Ken Kutaragi's vision of generating content algorithmically was born out by a lush *Gran Turismo* demo that featured a trackside crowded with trees. What was so special about them? All were unique fractal-generated objects swaying individually (and photoreal-

First PlayStation 2 Gameplay Screens Revealed!

➡ ArtdInk, known for being supporters of every new Sony innovation (the company also had early PlayStation titles) has leaked a few screens from its upcoming PSX 2 launch title *Take The A-Train VI*. The game, a sequel to the popular Japanese train management sim (a PC version and PSX version have been released in the U.S. with limited success), will be released on PSX 2, says ArtdInk, because the company feels the system "is the most powerful available."

Gameplay revolves around city planning and getting your train systems running properly — think *SimCity* with trains. PlayStation 2's 3D power will enable complex city models that can be viewed from any angle and will render photorealistic scenes of your working railways. While we doubt this title will make it to the U.S. at all (too much transla-

tion needed without enough sales potential), it is the first official title announcement for the upcoming system.

■ Build a city and manage its railway system. Not our first choice for what we'd want to see on powerful next-generation hardware, but still fun

■ You can now zoom around the 3D world at will to get the best view of the action. Well, the best view of the trains and tracks, anyway

■ While this shot is still early and missing some of the details the finished product will have, it gives a good idea of the realism the developers are striving for with PSX 2
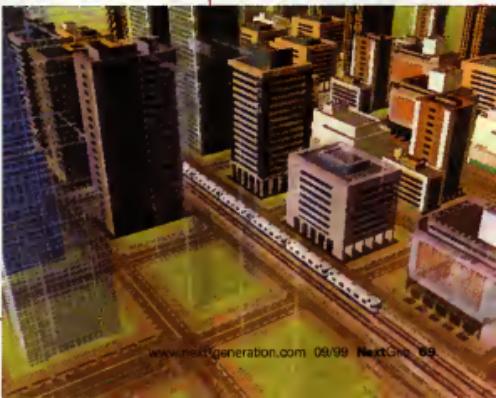
istically) in an ever-changing wind. Demos of flocks of birds flying in 3D (while dodging objects) also helped show the power of the system.

Still, anyone who thought developing for PlayStation 2 would be as easy as for PlayStation got a rude awakening at the conference. "It's pretty crazy," said one developer **Next Generation** spoke to. "It's not really a question of what you can do or can't do. It's more like you know that [PlayStation 2] can do anything you can really think of, but the real

IT IS...

■ Outside the entrance to Sony's new PlayStation shop at the San Francisco Metreon, of course . . .

■ STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

trick is going to be figuring out the best way to do it." He wasn't kidding: much of the discussion among developers involved the best way to optimize code and to efficiently communicate with the various co-processors in the system. "A lot of programmers want to see this as a single-tasking PC, like a Commodore 64," said the developer, "but it isn't." One half-hour session involved simply watching a Sony staffer shave some code from wasting six cycles to wasting two cycles.

Although Sony is counting on middleware makers to help developers, the company promises it will also deliver a full complement of libraries. Still, writing to "the metal" — programming at the assembly level, which was discouraged on PSX I — will be mandatory on PSX 2 for those who want powerful results.

"There were some developers simply in disbelief at the hurdle it will take to code for PlayStation 2,"

WHAT ABOUT ONLINE?

Although Sony confirmed that there would be no modem, the company unveiled plans for standard Internet communication protocols for PlayStation 2 — and encouraged developers to use them. With FireWire, USB, and PCMCIA ports, end users will likely have several ways to go online with PlayStation 2, including modems, DSL, and cable modems. By supporting the protocol, developers can ensure that their game will work with whatever solution the consumer chooses.

"You know it can do anything you can really think of — the trick is figuring out how"
— a PlayStation 2 developer

said another developer. "It's clear you're going to need a team at least twice the size of a standard PlayStation team to do your first game." Many PC developers, he said, used to letting DirectX handle lighting and transformations of surfaces, would "need to learn new skills, quick," although those with experience in Glide programming will be a little more used to setting up triangles themselves.

Another big problem for traditional PC programmers is the mere 4MB of VRAM: a serious potential bottleneck. Again, the programmers

we spoke to (who, admittedly, have more low-level experience than most at the conference), weren't too worried. "Depending on how fast those DMA channels are, it should be no problem" swapping textures in and out of main system RAM, said one. One thing that everyone agreed on, though, was that the command line debugger was going to be a nightmare to use.

The best gossip, not surprisingly, came with the news SCEA rented the fourth floor of Sony's massive new Metreon entertainment complex in San Francisco for a lavish party on the first night of the conference. Among the cheapskates gleaned from loose-lipped Sony staffers and others at the party: Sony intends PlayStation 2 to be a viable "hotline" product in living rooms for 10 years; the system is fully HDTV ready; for both Japanese and U.S. HDTV standards; the system may very well launch with a modem in Japan; more than $1 billion has been spent so far on PlayStation 2; *Gran Turismo* for PlayStation 2 looks "at least 50% done"; there'll be a new color for the system, which isn't gray; the system has four game ports; software is the only thing holding up the launch in Japan — people from Namco described "ports" as if they were already done. How factual any of these statements are, you'll need to judge for yourself.

Overall, the mood of programmers at the conference was one of exhilarated impatience. Yes, PlayStation 2 will be a nightmare to develop for, and the first games may not look much better than Dreamcast titles, but you don't become a game developer — or make great games — by worrying about limitations or difficulty; you do it by getting the system and getting to work. And that's exactly what it seems every person on Sony's development system list can't wait to do.
— *Chris Charla*

PSX 2 Tool News

The hardware ain't here yet, but the developer tools are coming along

■ The same tools that produce smooth animation during cut scenes will be available for use in in-game animations on PlayStation 2.

With dev kits almost out, Sony continues to build relationships that will help set PlayStation 2 apart from other next-generation consoles. And so late this summer, Sony brought in Discrete, the division of Autodesk responsible for the popular 3D modeling and animation suite 3D Studio MAX, as a middleware partner in PlayStation 2 game development.

Discrete will work with Sony to adapt its latest character-animation and modeling software for use with PlayStation 2, both for game artists and for use within a realtime 3D engine. Interesting, since the latest version of MAX, version R3, uses surface modeling, skin deformation, and softbody dynamics — say goodbye to nasty seams at elbows and shoulders.

SERIOUS CRIME...

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WEAPONS OF JUSTICE

PAC-MAN FEVER
BUCKNER & GARCIA

■ The *Pac-Man* patterns included with the original record work great with emulated versions of *Pac-Man*. We haven't scored 3,333,360 yet, but we're getting closer. Still, beating 256 levels on your first guy is a tough challenge

Pac-Man Fever Returns
Pac-Mania sweeps the nation again — but at what cost?

Heralding the millennium, veteran game rockers Buckner and Garcia have re-released their cult album *Pac Man Fever* on CD. The songs, including such "hits" as "Do the Donkey Kong," "Ode To A Centipede," and "Froggy's Lament," have all been digitally remastered for the best in retro-listening experiences. Those interested in ordering the CD can check out www.bucknergarcia.com.

Our roving reporter on the *Pac-Man* beat also reports that Billy Mitchell of Fort Lauderdale, Fla, recently scored 3,333,360 — a new record and the highest score possible. (The score was authenticated by high-score guru Walter Day; for more, see www.twingalaxies.com) Be sure to look to **Next Generation** for all of the hottest *Pac-Man* news and information every month.   **Next**Gen

In the Studio
Development news as it develops

09/99

While Queen Amidala could argue, "Coin-op videogames are dying, Senator," Sega still has some arcade force power left. According to sources deep, deep, deep inside Skywalker Ranch, Sega is developing an **arcade pod racing game** based on the scene from *Episode I*. No word as to when the game will be fully operational. (It was reported in this section several months ago that Atari Games was working on a *Star Wars: Episode I* coin-op title, but that misinformation was gathered by a mind-tricked informant who had seen documents of a long-cancelled title based on the original trilogy)
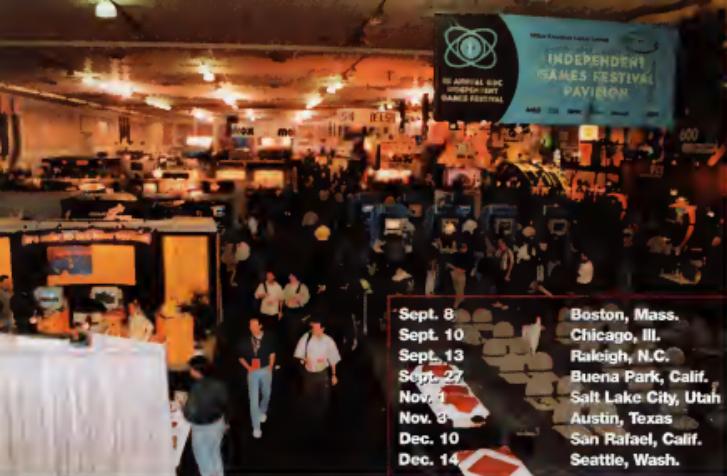

Firaxis has announced a standalone follow-up to Sid Meier's *Gettysburg*, entitled Sid Meier's **Antietam**. This first product in Sid Meier's Great Battles Series (keep your powder dry) is scheduled for release in the fall of 1999 and will be available for purchase exclusively from Firaxis' Web site at www.firaxis.com.

After Sony's *Johnny Mnemonic* fiasco, no company in all of game-dom wanted to touch the license of a sci-fi film starring Keanu Reeves. But after the stunning success of The Matrix, that's about to change. Word from inside the **Warner Interactive** offices is that *The Matrix* is very close to being signed by a game company. However, at press time, no announcements were being made as to who was going to pick up the rights to the title. And while we're on the subject, Warner has also recently licensed **The Dukes of Hazzard** to Southpeak Interactive. We think they should've held out for GT Interactive's *Driver* engine — that would've been worth a rebel yell.

Small publisher/developer Kemco has made an agreement with Ion Storm to bring Daikatana to Nintendo 64. Rumor has it that the title has a large team of Japanese developers furiously bringing the code over to Mario's machine. Expect this version to bring 25 weapons, 80 enemies, and Expansion and Rumble Pak compatibility to N64 when it releases early (ahem) this fall.

■ SHARK REPELLENT

Sony to discontinue I/O Port

Move signals price drop, attempt to thwart third-party add-ons

It's official: Sony has confirmed that the I/O port on the back of the PlayStation will be removed from future production runs. Although Sony never used the I/O port in any official product, third parties such as Interact used the port for add-ons like the Game Shark or Dex Drive. More recently, less-savory products like Game Wizard

(which enabled gamers to beat territorial lockouts and play Japanese games) and Emulator-Z (an illegal hardware emulator that plays Game Boy, NES, TurboGrafx and other games via PlayStation) have used the port.

Although making it harder for third parties that Sony considers undesirable is certainly an added benefit, the likely reason for the removal is to enable a price drop — "It's a manufacturing efficiency" is how it was described to **NG**. While Sony made no money on PlayStation hardware sales in 1995, in 1999 each hardware unit sold

makes a tidy profit, and cutting the I/O port will enable Sony to cut costs (presumably to $99 or even $89) without sacrificing much margin.

While we've got no word on what the Game Wizards of the world will do, rumor has it that the hackers at Datel, the developers of Game Shark, already have a viable Plan B for getting infinite live codes into the I/O-port-free PlayStation.

NextGen

> **Removing the I/O port will allow Sony to cut costs and lower the PlayStation price to $99 or so**

■ The original, R3000 series PlayStation (top) had an I/O port, multi-out, and RCA outs. This artist's rendering of the R9000 (bottom) shows that it will only have the multi-out, link-cable out, and power port. Not shown? Internal changes between the R3000 and 9000, like a moved CD mechanism and a dramatically simplified motherboard

■ CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Developers in Nintendo's Net

What games can we expect to see on Dolphin?

→ Although very little information is public about Nintendo's next system, analyzing both the market and Nintendo's past (and present) relationships with key developers gives us our first clues as to how the next-generation console war will be fought, and which third parties might be fighting on Nintendo's side. Following are snapshot analyses of the companies most likely to have games for the next Nintendo system, with an emphasis on the Japanese firms Nintendo has to impress to recover from its lackluster N64 showing.

Square

While there's no doubt that a revival of the ties between this RPG powerhouse and Nintendo would have incredible potential — at least on Nintendo's side — Sony is sure to realize that too. Although Square executives at a recent shareholder meeting announced their firm support for Sony alone, shareholder pressure to diversify, as well as the possibility of a sweetheart publishing deal from Nintendo, continues to make this a relationship to watch.

Enix

While the name may not be as recognized in the States as Square's, in Japan Enix's Dragon Quest series means big bucks. With Enix's newfound success on Game Boy Color, Nintendo is in a good position to gain Enix as a developer, and if Square remains with Sony, you can be sure that Nintendo will bend over backwards to get Enix back.

Capcom

While cartridges and a weak installed base in Japan made this perennial powerhouse reluctant to develop for N64, the DVD format and promise of a powerful system will hopefully change a few minds. Certainly any titles coming from Capcom would be a huge deal, but new versions of its fighting, Mega Man, or Resident Evil lines would be golden for Nintendo's fledgling system.

Konami

While Konami supported Nintendo with some decent titles for N64, it's tough to ignore the fact that its highest profile work (Metal Gear Solid) ended up on PlayStation. But with Nintendo being on par with Sony's next system in terms of both power and media, Nintendo's chances of steering better Konami projects its way could be more promising in the future.

Hudson

Since Nintendo has tried harder than anyone to push multiplayer gaming into the mainstream console world, the presence of its old ally Hudson on the next system is a no-brainer. Given the popularity of the Bomberman series in Japan and the success of Mario Party for N64, Nintendo will likely look to Hudson to help establish the multiplayer prowess of its new system early on.

Gamefreak/Creatures

These two developers' collaborative contribution to Nintendo: Pokémon. It took Nintendo far too long to exploit this raging pop culture phenomenon for N64 — in fact it has yet to make a worthwhile Pokémon title on any system other than Game Boy. Sales records and merchandising receipts don't lie, and unless the bottom drops out of the Pokémon market before then, Nintendo would be foolish not to have a Pokémon title or ten already in development.

HAL

While the Kirby and Earthbound games have been trapped in development hell and have yet to materialize on N64, HAL's mascot-fighter Smash Brothers became a mega-seller on both sides of the Pacific as soon as it hit the shelves. Surely a Dolphin-based version of this series would be a strong candidate, providing diversity as well as compelling multiplayer gaming in Nintendo's early next-gen lineup.

Those Brits are number one on any list for Nintendo where the American market is concerned. Rare's name alone sells games, and a Perfect Dark or Donkey Kong would sell systems almost as well as Mario. Also, moaning and groaning from the mature set aside, don't forget about Rare's deal to make Disney games; Mickey would certainly be an excellent complement to Mario in many parents' eyes.

Rare

Acclaim

While Nintendo may not have been directly responsible for pulling its fat out of the fire, N64 has been very good to Acclaim's pocketbook — a fact that won't likely be forgotten in the next generation. Look for Nintendo to try very hard to keep the *Turok*, *NFL Quarterback Club*, and *All-Star Baseball* franchises in its corner (and get them to appear as quickly as possible on the Dolphin system). Shouldn't be too hard.

LucasArts

Nintendo is sure to be very interested in continuing its relationship with this studio. Though *Shadows of the Empire* was not the critically acclaimed success Nintendo was hoped for, *Rogue Squadron* and *Episode I: Racer* definitely sold well enough to prove the partnership works well. One point of concern would be George Lucas' apparent personal interest in PSX 2 at this year's E3, but he could be enamored by Nintendo's new hardware once it's unveiled.

Midway

While its track record has been spotty in the past, Midway's games can still generate no end of fun (and duck for cover). Since Midway has always seemed to believe in developing for every viable platform, it should be a shoo-in for Dolphin development.

While another late-comer in this generation, Activision has certainly found that its N64 versions of *Nightmare Creatures* and *Vigilante 8* were profitable. Though Activision hasn't managed a breakout console hit in some time, the experience it brings to the table would be a welcome addition to the Dolphin team.

Activision

Electronic Arts

Though it was initially cold on the N64, once Electronic Arts signed on with EA Sports titles, things certainly heated up quickly. The rivalry that developed between Acclaim and EA was a bit ugly at times, but the resulting games were, no doubt, much better for it. Add in the excellent Bullfrog and Origin divisions that have traditionally worked on PC masterpieces, and Electronic Arts is a worth courting early.

RUMOR REPORT

▶ In the no-brainer department, word is that Nintendo is working on a sequel to the popular *Mario Kart 64* (still the best-selling N64 game in Japan to date) but with a twist: In light of the success of its mascot fighter *Smash Brothers* on both sides of the ocean, Nintendo will be giving the title a full mascot treatment. So if you've always wanted to know if an electric rat could outrace a pink puffball, start drooling in anticipation.

The *Metroid* pot continues to boil over, as people sift every meager clue to figure out if it will be present at or near the Dolphin launch. Samus Aran, gaming's original tough chick, deserves to be brought back, and a more mature title in this vein could help Nintendo temper its kiddie image in the next generation, but Nintendo remains tight-lipped on the project.

As Nintendo's Space World show approaches at the end of August, people have begun to wonder whether or not it will make further announcements on Dolphin. Given the rumors and speculation about Nintendo not meeting its planned 2000 release goal, and the promise at this year's E3 that more information would come before the end of the year, a no-show at Space World would almost certainly mean Dolphin is on hold.

As would be expected, considering the enormous popularity of Rare's *GoldenEye* and the inevitable success of the sequel, *Perfect Dark*, the rumors are flying that development is already under way on *Perfect Dark 2* as an early Dolphin title. Given the system-selling potential of such a game, one would think Nintendo/Rare would be crazy not to.

HARDCORE

The developer is my shepherd; I shall not wait. He maketh me angry because his games are always late: He leadeth me into the hype. He restoreth old games: He leadeth me in the path of retro gaming for his company's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of censorship, I will fear no senator, for Thy PlayStation is with me: Thy memory card and Thy controller, they comfort me. Thou preparest a light gun before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with codes: my GameShark runneth over. Surely good games and accessories shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the local electronics store for ever.

Thomas Ali II
a.k.a. "Lil' Monk"

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

▶ Sega finally launched its television ad campaign (see page 61). With slogans like "It's thinking" and "Outsmarting it will only make it smarter," they clearly weren't referring to the average MTV viewer. Will "the kids" get the viral campaign? We're not sure, but at least the Saturn spots showed some gameplay. Who'll be Duke's sugar daddy? GT Interactive, buffeted by the slings and arrows of outrageously unfortunate third and fourth quarters, is up for sale. Securing Bear Stearns to help find a new investor, a potential merger or a buyer, GT looks as though it will stay in the game, but only as a shadow of its former self. Square has finally confirmed the industry's worst-kept secret: *Chrono Trigger 2*. Coming for PlayStation in Japan this winter (and to America in 2000), the company is calling the game *Chrono Cross* instead of *CT2*, most likely in an effort to make the announcement at least a little surprising. Voulez-vous au devant avec moi ce soir! Delphine is out for EA's blood in a recently filed breach of contract suit. The developer alleges that EA stole its intellectual property (how to make a good moto racing

---

Arcadia

PlayStation 2, The End Of Atari, and Sega's ER frenzy

ARCADE GAME FACTORIES TO USE PLAYSTATION 2

→ Sony Computer Entertainment is still playing it coy about officially confirming that arcade games will use licensed versions of PlayStation 2 hardware next year, but it's true. Namco and Taito have already reported such plans; reliable sources indicate that Capcom — and possibly Konami — will do likewise. A Sony arcade-licensing program makes sense; after all, Namco, Capcom, and Tecmo released arcade games using the original PlayStation platform, and popular arcade titles often make the hottest console games. (It's also a good way for Sony to combat Sega's Naomi strategy.) The first PSX 2 arcade-board-based title will be *Tekken 4*, arriving in early 2000.

MIDWAY REINS IN ATARI

Atari lost its independent manufacturing role three years ago when it was purchased by WMS Industries/Midway Games. For the past 18 months, it has gradually lost its status as a developer of unique hardware platforms and began sharing some hardware with Midway.

In recent weeks, Atari lost its independent management, sales, and marketing functions, and is apparently soon to lose its independent distributor network to the arcade industry. All that's left is a physically separate location (Milpitas, Calif.) and the Atari brand name. Atari will remain in Milpitas so that it can retain access to Silicon Valley computer-programming talent. Atari will exist basically as a development boutique within Midway, something like the old AM2 within Sega, which, by the way, reliable reports say has been consolidated into the Sega fold, although independent confirmation wasn't possible at press time.

Midway will sell Atari-developed games as an internal brand under the Midway umbrella, much as GM sells the Cadillac and Chevrolet brands even though they are all GM cars, designed and built in GM plants.

Atari did axe some programmers recently, but this was described as a consolidation of the company's arcade and console divisions into a single entity. Midway sources describe the entire restructuring is a matter of downsizing . . . er, "right-sizing."

SEGA'S NEW LINEUP

→ Besides its *F355 Challenge* driving simulator, Sega's fall arcade lineup runs the gamut from baseball to real-life emergency simulators. If you'd like to elevate arcade driving into a life-or-death medical emergency, try *Ambulance*. With it, the last Sega game slated to use the Model 3 platform. You take the part of an ambulance driver, pick up patients, and race against the clock to the hospital. Not only have you got to get around traffic and ordinary city obstacles; you also have to keep one eye on the patient's heart-rate monitor onscreen. Gameplay resembles earlier Sega arcade titles such as *Harley Davidson* and *Crazy Taxi*, you get full access to a 360-degree environment, and the whole fun of the challenge is to choose your own unique route to the destination.
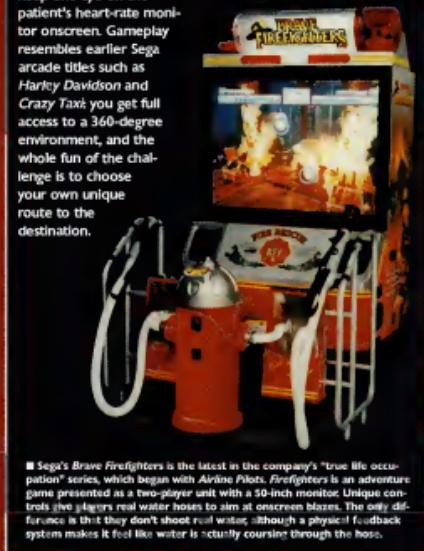
■ Sega's *Brave Firefighters* is the latest in the company's "true life occupation" series, which began with *Airline Pilots*. *Firefighters* is an adventure game presented as a two-player unit with a 50-inch monitor. Unique controls give players real water hoses to aim at onscreen blazes. The only difference is that they don't shoot real water, although a physical feedback system makes it feel like water is actually coursing through the hose.

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game), sabotaged a Delphine title EA was publishing (*Moto Racer 2*), undermined Delphine's development of a sequel (*Moto Racer 3*), and killed Delphine's dog (?!!!). EA will not comment on the specifics but says it just ain't so. (OK, we made up the dog part.) **Cheaper is better. Sega learned that lesson** in Japan this June when, having lowered the Dreamcast's price by around $80, the company's weekly hardware sales rocketed up over 10,000%. According to Sega, it sold 65,000 units in four days . . . **Which may be the only thing** keeping Sega out of the poorhouse. Just after lowering its prices,

Sega's stock was downgraded by a leading investment firm in Tokyo to "near junk" status. The downgrade resulted in a precipitous drop in share price, with Sega reaching an all-time low. The stock has since rallied, but Reuters reports investor confidence is still at an all-time low. **The Clinton administration took a stand** for freedom, justice, and PlayStation recently by raising the bar for supercomputers. Word spread through the press that came this spring the Commerce Department would bar sale of PlayStation 2 to China because it is too powerful. After much scorn and derision from critics and politi-

cos alike for being afraid of a game machine (perhaps someone explained to Clinton that *Nuclear Strike* was a game, not a how-to simulator), the administration caved, dramatically increasing the number of operations that a machine must be able to perform in one second before it's banned for sale to sensitive nations. Sony representatives say they're baffled that mainstream papers were reporting the system was too powerful, as the Department of Commerce had never made any decision about the system, and it is to be manufactured in Japan — well outside of the DoC's jurisdic-

tion. We at *Next Generation* actually suspect the story was planted by PC manufacturers in an effort to make the supercomputer classifications look ridiculous. It worked. **Driver may not** be the best selling PlayStation game ever — that honor belongs to *Gran Turismo* — but the game's already shipped 1,000,000+ units. Maybe GT has a chance after all . . . **And in the latest news from Dallas**, the grass is still green, the sky is still blue, and *Daikatana* is still "almost done."
— Compiled by *Aaron John Loeb*
Next Generation Online

→ Alphas

The best previews in the business

■ DREAMCAST

CASTLEVANIA:
Step aside, Buffy — Konami's legendary
family of vampire slayers comes to Dreamcast
with a sexy heroine

■ Targeting enemies in *Resurrection* will be more intuitive than in the N64 version, without the auto-targeting featured in that title

RESURRECTION

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami** ■ Release Date: **Q1 2000** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

If the rivalry between Mario and Bowzer is the oldest in videogaming, then surely the second oldest is between the Belmont clan and Dracula. Like *Mario*, the roots of *Castlevania*'s blood feud began in the early days of NES and continues today, in the early days of Dreamcast.

Once again, the war against the unholiest of bloodsuckers will be waged on the gothic grounds of Dracula's castle (and will undoubtedly cost thousands of innocent torches their lives). *Resurrection* will be fully 3D, but it won't be as exploratory or puzzle driven as the Nintendo 64 *Castlevania*.

"This game is pure 3D action," explains Team Leader Norio Takamoto. "Think of it as a 3D version of the very first *Castlevania*. The core game is the battles with various enemies."

Set in the year 1666, the Dark Countess has summoned Dracula back from hell. To maintain order, the powers of light have summoned two warriors to combat them, which gives players the choice of two whip-cracking heroes. The first is Victor Belmont, a new character of the stoic, he-man variety. The second is the svelte Sonia Belmont. Sonia starred in the Game Boy *Castlevania* and comes

to 3D after a stint at the Lara Croft Academy of enhanced modeling. Both characters use a whip as their primary long-range weapon, and there will be six traditional secondary weapons to collect, including an axe, boomerang,

dagger, and holy water.

"Each secondary weapon also has a special attack," Takamoto says. "For example, the dagger's special attack will shoot out multiple daggers in all directions."

> ■ "This game is pure 3D action. Think of it as a 3D version of the very first *Castlevania*"
>
> — Team Leader Norio Takamoto

■ Expect everything from Frankenstein monsters to ghosts [left], zombies, mummies [top left], werewolves, and of course, some traditional fire-spitting totems [above]

WHO IS NORIO TAKAMOTO?
Before becoming the Team Leader on *Resurrection*, Norio Takamoto worked on *Bottom of the Ninth* series. Before that, he did a little design work on *Castlevania: Bloodlines for the Genesis*. While he started in Japan, Takamoto has been working for Konami in the U.S. for seven years. How does he feel about leading the first U.S.-developed *Castlevania*? "The team members are all Americans, except me," Takamoto says, "so it's all American tastes merged with traditional *Castlevania* tastes, because everything we're building on from before was done in Japan. So this is pretty much a localized *Castlevania*. The tastes are more based on U.S., so I think it will be more exciting for [Americans]."

Because the game is action driven, levels will progress in a straightforward, linear fashion. There will be few stages, which Takamoto describes as worlds, each with roughly 10 areas or levels that vary in size.

Of course, there will be a variety of enemy minions and boss characters to battle. Although the final number hasn't been nailed down, expect in the neighborhood of 40 different enemies altogether. Enemies aren't the only thing that aren't decided: the game's assets are just now coming together; with 50% of the graphics, 20% of the programming, and 50% of the sound complete.

Yet, early levels already depict fantastic detail and lighting. *Castlevania*'s world expands beyond previous 32- and 64-bit limitations with amazingly long draw distances and elaborately detailed textures within each environment. While the graphics have changed, gameplay hasn't: it still involves whipping at torches to reveal items, aalthough players will face as many as four enemies at a time.

The design also incorporates three camera modes that can be changed on the fly — a normal behind-the-character camera, an auto-seek mode that looks on enemy characters, and a no-seek camera that enables players to position the camera to their liking (for example, a side-view for a particular jump). New moves include a diving roll, and a jump backwards will include a backflip. As

■ The environments vary from outdoor graveyards with evil gravediggers to a mummy room to eerie laboratories

■ Not unlike *Resident Evil*, the sound of footsteps will reflect the type of surface the player is walking on

expected, pushing far forward on the analog stick brings the character from a walk to a run.

"Since this game is a pure action

> **Castlevania's world expands beyond previous 32- and 64-bit limitations with amazingly long draw distances and elaborately detailed textures**

■ A messaging system programmed into the artificial intelligence will enable enemies to work together to try and defeat the player. Player character models are about 1,000 polygons; enemies average 500 to 900 polys

■ Victor Belmont is the second playable character, although he was not running in game during *Next Generation*'s visit to Konami

game," Takamoto says, "performance is a really, really big deal for us. So we're optimizing as much as possible."

The game will run at more than 30 frames per second, and the team of four programmers and seven artists/designers have included eye candy such as particle system effects for fire and blood and translucent ghosts.

While the characters won't have much dialogue, the music that's going into *Castlevania* already speaks volumes. Not unlike the *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* soundtrack, *Resurrection*'s music is especially ambient and gothic, yet features more powerful, modern elements. Upbeat techno-rhythms pulse and blend with vocals from a Benedictine choir, perfectly capturing the mysterious essence that is a trademark of *Castlevania*.

When *Castlevania Resurrection* is released, the series will span every major system from 8-bit to 128-bit. But even though Konami has chosen not to include VMU mini-games and is tentative on Rumble Pak support, the game is certainly showing signs of being worthy of Dreamcast. — *Tom Russo*

THIS IS THE HEART.

Sega ● Dreamcast

■ The lighting effects make good use of the Dreamcast hardware, giving the game arcade-style flash

■ **DREAMCAST**

DRACONUS:
CULT OF THE WYRM

■ Publisher: **Crave Entertainment** ■ Developer: **Treyarch** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S**

Treyarch surprised us with the innovative *Die by the Sword* for PC — can its Dreamcast game do the same?

■ The large variety of enemy characters are modeled with 1,000 to 2,000 polygons

Treyarch's PC action/adventure, *Die by the Sword*, earned every bit of its five-star rating. Unfortunately, despite the game's quality, sales figures were poor. Fortunately, the El Segundo, California-based developer remains undaunted.

"The PC market isn't as big as that for consoles," says Treyarch Lead Designer Mark Nau, "and the fact that the Dreamcast platform was coming to the U.S. at about the same time as we could get a title done seemed like a perfect opportunity."

While preparing this medieval action/adventure exclusively for Dreamcast, Treyarch remains tight-lipped about the game's story. Even the names of two main characters, a male warrior and a female mage, haven't been revealed yet. But *Draconus: Cult of the Wyrm* (tentative title) will be instantly

familiar to fans of classics such as *Golden Axe* and Capcom's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* brawler. Players will fight their way through 15 levels, each populated by 50–80 enemies (a *Die by the Sword* level had between 8–20 baddies) and a boss character, ranging from humanoid creatures like goblins and skeletons to bug-like creatures and giant dragons.

"We have a 'hub' structure to the adventures," Nau says, "like a story in three acts. You solve the problems in the first 'hub,' then you can progress to the next one." In each hub, the player has some freedom to select what adventure to conquer next before eventually tackling the final adventure that wraps it up.

Non-linear gameplay is just the start: Each main character provides a different gameplay style. A character advancement
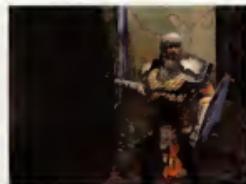
■ The more arcade-style control method should make this title more accessible than *Die by the Sword* — of course, every button on the controller will be used

"We can make hellhounds spit fire and six-legged basilisks with their stone-turning gaze"
—Treyarch Lead Designer Mark Nau

system will enable gamers to improve the heroes' abilities in both swordplay and magic, and, says Nau, the characters will learn "super-moves that can clear out many enemies at once or do extra damage to one creature."

The game will certainly emphasize action, but Nau seems especially pleased with the game's ability to give players the freedom to explore a 3D world and fight opponents within the same engine.

"It's a seamless 3D fighting experience," says Nau. "You can run away a bit, find some better ground to fight on, and then dispatch your foes."

Blood sprays during combat and enemies losing their limbs (depending on where the player hits them) will be

par for the course. "There is something quite satisfying about being able to chop up the bad guys while trying to save the world," Nau confesses with a grin.

In addition to the non-stop action, Treyarch is working on an advanced enemy AI, enabling NPCs to move intricately in evasive situations and to work together to apply oppressing group tactics. Players will also encounter some amusing scripted events such as guards sitting under a walkway playing dice, all of which should make for a nicely varied gaming experience.

In moving from PC keyboard to Dreamcast controller, Treyarch's unique *Die by the Sword* controls (enabling you to perform virtually any sword movement by pushing various directional buttons)

will be replaced by traditional preset moves. Treyarch's proprietary physics-based animation engine, called VSIM, made the advanced PC controls possible, but now that technology has been harnessed to bring very smooth multi-legged character animations to *Draconus: Cult of the Wyrm.* "So we can make hellhounds spit fire," says Nau, "and six-legged basilisks with their stone-turning gaze."

Unfortunately, Treyarch is not working on a multiplayer online option like the one in *Die by the Sword.* But given the polish the developer put into that title, *Draconus* should prove a worthy action/adventure game, which will give *Soul Fighter* (see preview, page 33) some stiff competition later this year.

— Jörg Tittel

AN UNTIMELY DEATH?

Die by the Sword died on the shelves, selling a meager number of copies. But in our review of Treyarch's first PC game (NG 42, June 1998), our reviewer gushed that it was "two games in one, with an adventure mode that could stand by itself as a game of *Tomb Raider* standards, and a fighting engine that compares favorably to most modern brawlers." You can probably find this game in the bargain bin at any larger computer store. Do yourself a favor and pick it up.

■ Although the game builds on familiar *AD&D* themes, the character models are rich in detail, and some are frighteningly original
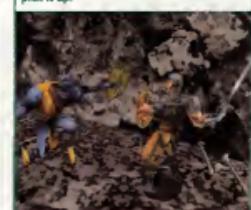
■ One wrong move and a patrol car will be on your tail in no time. And thanks to new AI, the aggressive cops will even run you off the road, as seen here [below, left]

■ Although these shots show placeholder *Test Drive 5* car models (higher poly versions will be added later), the environments here have been redesigned for Dreamcast

■ DREAMCAST

TEST **DRIVE 6**

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Pitbull Syndicate** ■ Release Date: **Q4 1999** ■ Origin: **U.K.**

Developer Pitbull gets ready to run the next-generation racer gauntlet with *Test Drive* for Dreamcast

→ *Gran Turismo* changed the world of driving games forever — to succeed today, racers need more than a licensed car or two, and UK-based developer Pitbull Syndicate knows it. While it's doing a PlayStation version as well, the company is planning for the Dreamcast version of *Test Drive* to be the show pony that has the GT-beating bells and whistles.

Although the build we previewed at the developer's headquarters was only 35% complete, *Test Drive 6* was already boasting new car physics, interactive environments, and enhanced AI. Aside from the graphical power Dreamcast possesses, the re-worked AI will likely be the biggest improvement to the series.

"The primary issue we wanted to address with *Test Drive 6* was the AI, which we felt could have been better in *Test Drive 5*," says Lead Programmer Chris Kirby. "We're tuning the AI so that

much more is constantly happening."

Here's one example. Honking the horn is by no means a new feature in driving games, but the ability to move a drone car out of the way by hitting the horn is a welcome touch. When a player has wandered onto the wrong side of the road, drone cars will now attempt to swerve thanks to the new code.

> **High-speed chases involving up to three patrol cars at a time add new life to the game**

High-speed chases involving up to three patrol cars at a time also add new life to the game. In previous *Test Drive* titles, patrol cars would attempt to apprehend the player without back-up, often leaving them playing catch-up through the remainder of the race. Now the highway patrol tracks the player and sets up roadblocks as a police helicopter reports the target's movements. Pitbull has also coded drone cars as potential offenders — if they are caught speeding, they will now have to pull over and receive a ticket (or possible arrest) for committing traffic violations.

All car models seen in this early version have been plucked from *Test Drive 5*, which explains their low-poly look. When the new vehicle models are added, more than 40 U.S. and European licensed dream machines can be stockpiled in the new (thank you, *Gran Turismo*) *Test Drive* Garage feature.

The 25-person team has focused heavily on capturing the individual flavor of each city featured in the game. Thirty new tracks in real-world locations such as Paris, New York, Italy, and London will all display recognizable landmarks. "We traveled to Rome," explains Lead Artist David Taylor, "and took as many photos as we could in order to authentically recreate the look and feel of the city."

Attention to detail has also been paid to the game's music and sound effects, including a heavier-than-usual mix of Fear Factory's cover of the Gary Numan classic "Cars." A rap artist has also been signed up to lay the music down exclusively for the New York–based tracks. "The *Test Drive* franchise has always signed up big-name bands for the soundtrack," explains Associate Producer Gerald "Smilo" Debrung. "This time around, we want players to identify the music with specific

track locations."

One area of the Dreamcast development process that could make the title stand out from previous *Test Drive* titles is how well the game utilizes Dreamcast's VMU, which currently only displays the Pitbull Syndicate logo. The team would like to include mini-games depending if they have time. As for online options, no decision has yet been made.

If *Test Drive 6* takes full advantage of Dreamcast, this should be one of the best years for the series. There's already a strong possibility that another *Test Drive* title could appear on the platform, although Pitbull's team is already salivating at the thought of PlayStation 2. "We're using Dreamcast as a kind of stopgap," admits Debrung. "Rest assured we'll be at the front of the line as soon as PlayStation 2 dev kits become available."

— Govin Ogden

■ Expect to race through famous landmarks such as the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France. Watch out for those red French minis, though, they're squirrely

■ A number of shortcuts are available, but you may have to break some barriers to find them

■ All the graphic power of Dreamcast is evident in these early screens of *Test Drive 6*. The draw distance is significantly higher, and the road textures, landscape, and even sky textures are significantly more detailed than the game's PlayStation predecessors

→Alphas

While his *kamerad* draws a bead on you, a Nazi trooper reaches down to throw your grenade back in your face: if this kind of standoff doesn't make you sweat, you're probably dead

■ **PLAYSTATION**

MEDAL OF HONOR

■ Publisher: **EA** ■ Developer: **DreamWorks** ■ Release Date: **Fall 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

Wondering about a *Saving Private Ryan* game? This is as close as it gets

→ Well before *Saving Private Ryan* was released, Stephen Spielberg realized that the concept — if not the movie's actual storyline — would make a good game. After all, as Producer Peter Hirschmann says, "there's no greater enemy than the Nazis." Still, the

■ Although the outdoor environments aren't as open as in, say, *Shogo*, the team has used the characteristic limits of Normandy, hedgerows, to great advantage: when you're playing, the environments feel very natural

only thing the game shares with *Private Ryan* is Capt. Dale Dye, the consultant who helped ensure the movie's realism. Dye, a professional war historian, was involved in every step of the game, from providing reality checks for the eight missions to helping the team acquire and

test-fire vintage guns. Still, Dye didn't always get his way, as Hirschmann explains: "We want the game as real as possible, but when realism and fun collide, we go for fun." So don't expect any dud grenades — U.S. or German.

The game follows the exploits of Lt. Jimmy Patterson, a C-47 pilot recruited by the OSS (the precursor to the CIA) to undertake various missions behind enemy lines, from rescuing a high-ranking intelligence officer to scuttling a U-Boat to infiltrating a POW camp in a castle (an homage to the original *Wolfenstein*, says Hirschmann). Each of the eight missions has three stages: infiltration, execution, and exfiltration. "Most movies end as soon as the mission is over, but in reality getting out is usually the hardest part," says Hirschmann. The level structure enables the designers to alter the pace of the game: infiltration and execution require stealth, while exfiltration — fighting your

PLAYSTATION POWER

First-person shooters haven't done well on PlayStation, but Hirschmann says it's because they've tended to be ports. With Medal, he says, "it's totally designed to be optimized for PlayStation." That includes the engine and the control, which is designed for dual analog sticks: left stick is strafe, right is look, the left analog button (L3) is aim, and R3 is center. After a few minutes, we found the control very easy — maybe not as easy as Quake with a mouse, but better than anything else we've seen on PlayStation.

way out — is where the action comes in.

The action should be furious, since the team created a 3D engine and animation system from the ground up for the game. While the team has done a good job designing and populating the levels with objects, what really stands out is the animation and AI of the enemies. "We basically have a system where AI and animation are tied together," says Lead Animator Suni Thankamushy. "I look at each enemy as an individual actor with individual behavior." By starting with relatively simple states, the enemies respond with startlingly realistic actions. For instance, throw a grenade at a Nazi and he might pick it up and throw it back, or kick it. If he has less time, he'll run or seek cover. Throw a grenade into a group and one of the Germans may dive on it, yelling for the others to save themselves. The animation is exceptionally fluid as

■ This Nazi tried to kick away a grenade, but a well placed shot caused him to pause for a second too long. End result? One less Nazi standing between Europe and freedom

well, which dramatically increases the realism of the game — as well as enabling amazingly cinematic, if bloodless, deaths (rumor has it blood

was removed to avoid an M rating).

But the major appeal of the game is the incredible sense of tension it creates. Imagine infiltrating the POW camp in a stolen uniform — showing your forged papers gets you by the front guards, but not the SS officer, who wants to start a conversation . . . in German. Hell. Do you shoot him? What if the guard hears? Is the mission shot? Can you fight your way out from here? You will sweat when you play this game — it should deliver the suspense of a stealthy assassination and the fury of a suicidal charge at a Nazi machine-gun nest.

With the engine and control optimized for PlayStation (see sidebar), and what look to be some amazingly well designed missions, Medal of Honor may be as big a breakout hit on PlayStation as Private Ryan was in theaters. And, more importantly, it may be just as emotionally affecting.
— Chris Charla

You will sweat when you play this game — imagine infiltrating a POW camp in a stolen Nazi uniform . . .

■ One of the missions puts you in disguise as a Schutzstaffel officer, but once the shooting starts, your Nazi uniform won't help you from the marauding Hun hordes — if you're smart, you'll talk your way through as far as possible

■ Much of the fighting takes place in shattered French towns [right]. There are no fancy weapons, but the muzzle flashes from regular rifles are frightening enough [above]

ARMY MEN
SARGE'S HEROES

Character-Based Combat.

■ There are still survivors onboard the ship who, when found, will react to your presence by either helping you out or attacking you

■ DREAMCAST
CARRIER

■ Publisher: **Jaleco** ■ Developer: **Jaleco** ■ Release Date: **Q4 1999** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Jaleco takes survival horror out on the high seas

You've heard the plot before: a biological agent gets loose and infects the surrounding populace, turning them into zombies. What Carrier has that Resident Evil doesn't, however, is a new location, more weaponry, and a release date months ahead of the nearest competition.

You play an armed soldier determined to make sure both that the infected crew aboard the aircraft carrier you're on never reaches port and to escape with your life (if possible). Along the way, you'll have to deal with an assortment of mutated horrors, a wide variety of puzzles, and a unique cast of NPCs.

The biggest twist in gameplay comes from your scanner, which can be used at will to identify whether an NPC is infected. If not, you can talk to them and receive vital clues about your mission. Make sure you scan everybody you come across, because some zombies are indistinguishable from humans but will attack if you get too close. In fact, most of the suspense in the game so far comes from the fact that anybody you meet could be a threat — sometimes even paranoid humans will take shots at you.

Although Carrier looks good so far, at this point it does seem to lack some of the indefinable magic that makes Capcom's horror games so genuinely creepy. In the final few months before release, it is imperative that the team focuses on getting the mood of the game dead on, or it's possible that Carrier may sink under the weight of its own horror pretensions. — Blake Fischer

■ Even though you're stuck on a ship, there are still plenty of places to go and explore. Some areas have already become overgrown with the strange plant life that turns people into zombies

■ The graphics definitely look good (check the waterfall), but then, that's one area of game design the French have always been noted for. What remains to be seen is whether the action can be brought up to a level that matches the visuals

■ ARCADE, DREAMCAST

SOUL **FIGHTER**

■ Publisher: **Piggyback** ■ Developer: **Toka** ■ Release Date: **September 1999** ■ Origin: **France**

Can a French developer crack the Japanese arcades?

PERFECT SKIN?
Piggyback's Louie Beatty and Vincent Pargney (formerly with Virgin and Eidos, respectively) have found that the subtlest things can make the difference between success and utter failure in the Japanese market. One change — which was quite seriously pointed out by a Japanese consultant — was to the Warrior's skin tone.
"In European games, character skins are brown-pink, whereas in Japan they expect something closer to brown-yellow," says Beatty. "It's something they notice right away"

Paris-based developer Toka is trying something few Western outfits have managed: making an impact in Japanese arcades. Work on *Soul Fighter*, a 3D, *Final Fight*-style beat-'em-up began last September, but it's a notoriously tough row to hoe. Success in Japan isn't as simple as adding subtitles because *Lara* didn't look like an anime character.

However, European publisher Piggyback was co-founded by Louie Beatty and Vincent Pargney specifically to help developers target different markets, and talks with Japanese companies have been very positive, if a bit frustrating. "Unless you live in Japan, you can't imagine what they want," groans Beatty. "They prefer a lot of bright colors, blues and pinks, and cutesey animations like butterflies." And so, in went elements of Japanese fairy tales and history — and, yes, butterflies.

The game itself uses a three-button setup — punch, kick, and block — with a power bar for charging combos.

Fourteen different weapons will crop up here and there as well. You can choose from three character classes — Warrior, Magician, and Metisse (which seems to be a combination of the two) — all rendered with fluid, motion-captured animation.

Piggyback makes the further claim that after the game's arcade run in Japan, *Soul Fighter* will be re-worked in time for Dreamcast's launch in Europe. The change of venue doesn't seem to worry anyone. Pargney argues — with perfect logic — "If you can fit into the Japanese market, then it can fit in anywhere."
— Nigel Edge

> ▌ **"They prefer a lot of bright colors, blues and pinks, and cutesey animations like butterflies"**
> Piggyback co-founder Louie Beatty

■ Villagers have been charged into animals, and you save them by killing their animal bodies and collecting their souls — hence the title

■ Turbo pads (above) and power-ups (top) are important, but the real key to *CTR* is mastering the powerslide and jump turbo bonuses

CRASH TEAM RACING

■ Publisher: **SCEA** ■ Developer: **Naughty Dog** ■ Release Date: **October 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

PlayStation's premier U.S. development team turns its attention to racing

"*CTR* is a spiritual descent of *Mario Kart*," says Naughty Dog President Jason Rubin. "Absolutely, without a doubt." In fact, to prepare for cding the game, the company brought in gamers and watched them play the 16- and 64-bit versions of

Even eight weeks from final code, the game is already set to be the best four-player PlayStation game ever

Miyamoto's classic. "What we learned was that there wasn't much button action: people just hold onto the gas and push left and right," says Rubin, "and we realized there was room for us to add to the genre."

■ One of the best things about *CTR* is the lack of pop-up, even on tracks with a huge viewing distance

And add the team has. Even eight weeks from final, the game is already set to be the best four-player PlayStation game ever. Why? Turbos. While there are standard turbo power-ups and turbo pads, players can get even more speed by powersliding — at certain points in the powerslide ("when, like, gas has built up in the tail pipes," says programming guru Andy Gavin, who's already at work on a hush-hush PlayStation 2 project in Naughty Dog's former conference room), players can hit a button for a quick turbo — up to three progressively more powerful turbos per slide. Getting air by going off a jump also results in a turbo (weak, medium, or strong, depending on hang time). The result is a game in which you can almost always do a little better — start a powerslide earlier here, chain on an extra turbo there — the perfect

recipe for addition.

It shouldn't be a hard environment to get addicted in: this may be the best PlayStation engine yet. Not only is there no noticeable pop-up, but the world never fades to Gouraud-shaded polys — all you can see, as far as you can see, is textured, thanks to the memory savings in the engine, which has a sophisticated culling routine that keeps it from drawing polygons you can't see (like the backs of objects). In addition, textures don't suffer from any perceptible "res-out," or blockiness, up close, even when you're right against a wall. The engine also enables great special effects in the power-ups, which include missiles, mines, bombs, shields, turbos, and more.

Like *Diddy Kong*, the single-player game is an "adventure" mode where you need to beat tracks to gain access to other areas, get trophies, power up your kart, and unlock hidden characters and tracks. While characters have innate abilities — speed, handling, and acceleration — so do karts. So you can choose a character with a high top speed, put them on a cart that you've built the acceleration up on, and have both high top speed and quick acceleration. Karts can be saved to memory cards as well, so you can bring

them to multiplayer challenges away from home.

In addition to the adventure mode, you can race across 16 tracks in multiplayer, single-player, or time trial modes, and there are also seven deathmatch tracks where any combination of teams can play any number of ways — time limit, hit points, etc. If you're into kart racing, *Crash Team Racing* is the game that will make you buy a multi-tap for your PlayStation, without a doubt.

— Chris Charla

THE UN*MARIO KART*

Although *CTR* is certainly influenced by *Mario Kart*, it doesn't play much like it. Rubin explains: "In *Mario Kart*, it's hard to stay on the track. With *CTR*, the tracks are easy to stay on, but it's hard to go fast, since you lose speed when you steer, unless you're powersliding. You need turbos to win — pads, power-ups, and jump and powerslide turbos."

■ *Mario Kart*

■ *Crash Team Racing*

■ The light effects for power-ups are amazing — some of the best on PlayStation

■ The new engine ensures that textures don't res-out when viewed up close

■ Although the four-player screen is low res, it's still easy to tell what's going on

■ Joseph will fight with other characters at his side, and Volition will supply robust AI scripting for the NPCs. Players may also adjust three NPC variables — aggressiveness, conservation, and teamwork — at will

■ PC

SUMMONER

■ Publisher: **THQ**   ■ Developer: **Volition**   ■ Release Date: **Q1 2000**   ■ Origin: **U.S.**

From the team that brought you *Descent: Freespace* comes . . . a fantasy RPG? Yes — and it looks amazing

Publishers everywhere are quickly realizing an incontrovertible fact: RPGs are hot again. Since the release of Blizzard's *Diablo* (more than a million sold) and Bioware's *Baldur's Gate* (more than 500,000 and climbing), RPGs are the next big thing — potentially as huge as realtime strategy was three years ago.

But don't count *Summoner* among the countless "me too" products in the works. Offering a cross-pollination of *Diablo*'s fast and furious gameplay, *Baldur's Gate*'s classic story-driven RPG, and *Unreal*'s graphical wow, *Summoner* is a game for the next generation.

Still early in development, the game is far enough along to test the basic controls and get an eyeful of its stupendous 3D graphics. Massive enemies dwarf your characters, and the camera zooms in or out and circles your heroes with ease. Now, add to this picture highly detailed models, down to articulated fingers. Top this with a skeletal animation system that realistically animates the characters in walking, running, fighting, and jumping without jerking or popping between animations. Mix in a control system as easy as *Diablo*'s, a pause function for careful planning as seen in *Baldur's Gate*, two continents packed with huge indoor and outdoor levels, plenty of NPC interaction, and a complete mythology. That's *Summoner*.

"The success of *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate* opened our eyes to what people want," explains Mike Kulas, Volition's president and *Summoner*'s lead programmer. But Volition is taking the extra step, making *Summoner* a sweeping fantasy epic. The designers insist that the

> **One labyrinth is the hollowed-out body of a long-dead god — wander through the tunnels formed by his vertebrae**

player will, at no point, fight rats. Instead, you control Joseph, a Summoner capable of calling forth demons (who are every bit as nasty in this as any other fantasy world). Drawn into an epic quest by his talents, Joseph will cross continents and delve into dungeons that are not your average 10-foot corridors. One labyrinth we explored was the hollowed-out body of an ancient god — this three-headed giant serpent died in a mountainside, and exploration leads through the god's vertebrae (now enormous tunnels) and into caverns formed by his three heads.

The player may control a party of up to five characters, which includes a slot for summoned creatures. Over the course of their adventures, Joseph and company will face three giant demons, all of which possess a unique look and special attacks. The first demon (pictured) actually picks up the characters and hurls them across the cavern — the first real argument we've seen that Blizzard and Bioware are stunting the genre's growth by sticking to sprites.

If Summoner has an Achilles' heel, it's that diehard RPG fans may be alienated by its casual-gamer friendliness. Still, the company makes no excuses about going for the brass ring of the mass market. Volition promises "a few small quests," but

■ Using 3D models allows the monsters to act out those "special attacks" that used to be relegated to text descriptions. In this sequence, Luminar, Demon of Light, prepares to pick up Joseph and hurl him across the room

the game will be "primarily focused on the main quest." The end result will be a game about 25–30 hours in length. While this is sure to satisfy some, given that many RPG fans were kvetching about Baldur's Gate's 'paltry' 100 or so hours, it's likely to raise the eyebrows of the diehard. And unlike Baldur's Gate and Nihilistic's forthcoming Vampire: The Masgerade, the game will also lack the

ability to play online with friends through the single-player game, although there will be a Diablo-esque multiplayer game.

But misgivings of the diehard aside, Summoner is on target to parallel Vampire in its attempt to take RPGs to the next level. While Nihilistic's game may finally realize the conversion of pen-and-paper gaming to the computer, Summoner's rich tradition of fantasy RPG storytelling may change the minds of many gamers who have found traditional RPGs a bore. Now that's a story worth telling.
— Aaron John Loeb

■ Volition's proprietary engine for Summoner allows for the creation of spectacularly large and detailed environments, from sprawling cityscapes to tombs of long-dead kings, the dungeon masters at Volition bring fantasy to life

■ With a bevy of beasties to fight, Joseph will find himself among giant demons, spell-casting undead, and the hideous defenders of ancient kings

THE BIRTH OF THE COMPUTER RPG

Computer games got their start in Cambridge at M.I.T with Space War, pen-and-paper RPGs started in Wisconsin with Empire of the Petal Throne, but just where exactly did tabletop RPGs and computers first mix? Many point to Volition's hometown: Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. In the mid-to-late seventies, students at the University of Illinois, like Volition's Mike Kulas, began playing early dungeon crawls Avatar and Oubillette on one of the first wide area educational Networks, Plato. Even Wizardry had its roots in Plato. Strongly based on Oubillette, Wizardry even used some of the Plato game's spell names, like Dumapic.

INSTANT REPLAY

BRONCOS

#30 TERRELL DAVIS
IS AVERAGING 14.9 YARDS
PER CARRY TODAY
TO CELEBRATE, TO HUDDLE

■ The TV-style presentation has been expanded this year so that besides the action-oriented camera and player cut-aways, there is also a replay mode in which the announcers dissect the previous play onscreen

■ The draw of good football is in the spectacular plays and hard tackles. Sometimes it's rewarding simply to have one of your players drag the ball carrier onto the ground

A VIEW TO A KILL

While *Gameday* is the nicest-looking football game on the 32-bit block, there are a couple of Dreamcast football titles just around the corner with visuals that'll blow you away. Still, if you're looking for comprehensive features, it looks like *Gameday* has them all beat.

■ *Sega Sports NFL 2000* [top] will be the game to beat visually this holiday season.

■ ...although Iguana's new *QB Club* [bottom] looks great on Dreamcast, too

■ **PLAYSTATION**

GAMEDAY 2000

■ Publisher: **989 Studios** ■ Developer: **Red Zone** ■ Release Date: **October 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

Does 989 Studios have what it takes to beat the newest breed of sports games?

➜ A great football game can make or break a system. On PlayStation, fans have been kept especially happy thanks to the fierce competition between *Gameday* and *Madden* football, which has pushed the quality of each franchise higher year after year. This year, the developers at Red Zone have a lot to prove with *Madden* hot on their heels, as well as the upcoming Dreamcast version of *Sega Sports NFL 2K*.

It looks like they're taking the challenge seriously. Although the franchise is starting to show its age visually (especially next to the Dreamcast versions), the team has compensated by adding graphical touches that make the title more realistic than ever. Each player has been scaled to the actual size and weight of his real-life counterpart, so it's

actually possible to pick out favorites on the field without having to read their names. Plus, a replay mode actually breaks down how the play works by drawing out the patterns over the play — just like on TV (or in Sega's *NFL 2K*).

Play-wise, this version seems close to last year's five-star effort. The most noticeable improvement is the added GM mode, which allows you play the general manager as well as the coach over several seasons. Add to this comprehensive stat tracking and the ability to "draft" seniors from your latest *Gamebreaker 2000* save game, and this could be the most comprehensive football game to hit the market, which should go a long way toward making the game a strong competitor in the face of better-looking titles on Dreamcast.

— *Bloke Fischer*

How Does Your Rod Measure Up?

With its exclusive Dual Shock® compatible rod and reel controller, Bass Landing sets the standard for true-to-life fishing action. Now you can cast, set the hook, and reel them in just like real life. So pack your tackle box, pick up some cold ones, and grab your rod, 'cause fishing season is now open.

"Feel every bite and every fight"

- Game is bundled with custom designed fishing rod/reel controller
- Solo or tournament modes
- 5 challenging lakes, 14 species of fish
- Cast side arm, overhead, or skip
- Tutorial mode tells how the pros hook the big ones
- Dual shock compatible
- Stock your tackle box from 50 different rods, reels, rigs, and lures

agetec
AGES RATED ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY

▶The nebulae in Freespace 2 provide graphical zing and edge-of-your-seat suspense. Bumping into giant ships hidden in the icy clouds is a new thrill, adding meat to an increasingly lean genre

THE BIGGER THEY ARE...

Makers of space-combat games are newly obsessed with size. Entrants in the genre all feature massive ships and huge, fully operational battle stations. Here's a survey of some upcoming space-combat sims and the biggest man-made objects you'll see onscreen
- *Freespace 2*: 6 kilometers (super capital ships)
- *Independence War Deluxe*: 234 kilometers (giant mega transporter)
- *Starlancer & Freelancer*: 2 kilometers (star base)

■ PC

FREESPACE 2

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Volition** ■ Release Date: **Winter 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

Huge ships, big guns, and enormous battles all serve to prove that in space-combat games, bigger is indeed better

→ The appeal of space-combat games is piloting a fighter in the middle of a massive galactic firefight. As you engage in swirling dogfights, chasing the bogeys off your buddy's tail, monolithic gunboats spew pure photon death, tearing each other to pieces. Freespace 2, deep in development by Volition, already brilliantly captures this sensation.

As short on plot as the original (you are the Terrans besieged by the just-plain-evil spider-like Shivans), Freespace 2 builds on its predecessor's strengths. For example, where the first featured impressive capital ships more than a kilometer long, Freespace 2 brings in "super-caps," scaled to six kilometers and sporting up to 60 turrets. Placing you in the pilot seat of a single fighter flying through, around, and over these vessels as they engage other behemoths, the game

perfects the "I'm a little guy in a big war" feeling that Freespace pioneered.

These massive ships also abandon the now passé pulsing laser fire in lieu of beam weapons. Long streams of energy that strafe the hulls of opposing vessels, beam weapons send up searing torrents of fire and debris. The effect is staggering, as a beam 20 times the size of your ship cuts a battle cruiser in half right before your eyes.

Of special note is Volition's addition of nebulae. Introducing a heady mix of alpha blending, hardware fogging, and layered transparencies, Volition puts your ship in the midst of swimming space clouds. Skulking through a nebula, lit up occasionally by the crackle of lightning, you know the enemy might be right in front of you. When the clouds part, revealing a ship the size of a small city, the effect is terrifying.

Armchair space jockeys who have been itching for titanic battles among the stars should take heed. Freespace 2 should be the game that you've been waiting for. — Aaron John Loeb

■ A delightful collection of weapons shower death from the stars. On the left, a corvette is assailed by a stream of deadly missiles, and on the right is an example of beam weapons in action, cutting the unfortunate vessel right in two

What is gaming without freedom?

FREEDOM to play

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works up to 30' (10m) away · Takes a kicking, with an ultra tough power grip design · Up to 16 can play at one time with
Multi-tap Compatibility · reLOAD™ hot swap system uses only one AA Battery

■ This time the story revolves around the world's cutest polygonal dragon being whisked away to save the fantastic kingdom of Avalar

■ **PLAYSTATION**

SPYRO 2

■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Insomniac** ■ Release Date: **November 1999** ■ Origin: **U.S.**

Insomniac promises more varied gameplay and an even better engine for Spyro's second trip

DRAGON ENGINE
Even gamers who weren't excited about Spyro's gameplay were impressed with the game's 3D engine (Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin says it was better than Crash 2½). This year's engine is another big step forward — characters have twice the animation of last year's — and even packed with debug code, the early version we saw ran blisteringly fast.

Last year Spyro seemed to have everything it took: a great engine, a great character, and design help from Mark Cerny and Michael Johns. Unfortunately, Spyro failed to do the numbers of that other franchise Cerny had a hand in: Crash Bandicoot. Many gamers found Spyro's two tasks (rescuing dragons and collecting endless numbers of gems) repetitive and dull. Insomniac boss Ted Price acknowledges the complaints and promises Spyro 2 will be different: "Spyro is now more a game of completion, not collection."

Players still have two tasks ("talisman" tasks and "orb" tasks), but they're much different. To get talismans, players basically just need to get from one end of each of the game's 29 levels to the other. This, says Price, provides plenty of exploration and fun for younger and less-experienced players.

Hardcore players, he hopes, will be attracted to the quest for orbs. "Spyro 2 is the talisman tasks. Spyro 2.5 is the orb tasks." Two or three orb tasks are hidden

in each level, well off the beaten track — Price thinks some gamers may beat the talisman game without ever realizing orb tasks exist.

Players get orbs by beating inventive mini-games, which range from killing all the enemies in a certain area to herding a snow leopard away from danger to playing hockey by shooting the puck with Spyro's flame breath. Considering that the main complaint about Spyro was that it was too repetitive, the variety in the mini-games — no two are the same — should make Spyro 2 a much more intriguing prospect than the original game.

— Chris Charla

■ Spyro has a new move, the flutter [left], which gives extra bit of hang time at the end of a glide. There are still gems to collect [top], but Spyro now spends time interacting with others as well [above]

■ The highlights of every track are the gravity-defying jumps. It takes skill to nail the landings and not lose any speed, though

■ **PLAYSTATION**

CHAMPIONSHIP MOTOCROSS
featuring Ricky Carmichael

■ Publisher: **THQ** ■ Developer: **Funcom** ■ Release Date: **Fall 1999** ■ Origin: **Sweden**

THQ invites you to get down and dirty, thanks to a group of Swedes and one American champion

→ Yup. Sweden. In much the same way film companies make movies in certain locations because it's less expensive, publishers are finding cost-effective developers all over the globe.

Which is a good thing. *Championship Motocross* is shaping up to be a surprisingly deft little racer. A late-stage beta disc had every editor on the *Next Generation* staff taking a crack at it — its wide variety of tracks and responsive analog control, not to mention the accurate, sewing-machine-on-steroids whine of the 125cc engines, made it downright irresistible — although the fact that the AI had yet to be tweaked (making it all-but-impossible to place better than seventh out of eight) no doubt contributed its share of "This time I'll do better!" challenges. (The AI will be fixed before the game ships.)

It also doesn't hurt to have the endorsement — and help — of Ricky Carmichael. Carmichael is probably best known for his 1998 Supercross Series season, in which he became the only rider in history to win every single race

■ The game offers 12 different tracks over a variety of terrain and conditions, as well as three different classes of bikes, from the tiny-but-tough 125cc to the beefier 500cc

In the 125cc division. His expertise has helped with track design and tweaking the physics model, as well as having "brought some important sponsors to the game," according to a THQ spokesperson. No doubt that's important too — at least to THQ's marketing department.

However, with an apparent mini-boom in motocross titles in the works (there are also entries coming from Nintendo and EA Sports this fall), *Championship Motocross* stands out as a title that bears watching in the coming months. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

■ You can also pull tricks while riding and jumping (pictured at right) — yes, hanging off the bike can be done on purpose. Pay attention, though, or you could end up off the bike for other reasons

"GOD MADE DIRT.."

Championship Motocross' high level of challenge means you'll probably spend a lot of time "eating dirt." Intentionally eating dirt (technically known as geophagy) is a way, anthropologists suspect, for people to supplement nutrient-poor diets, as the practice usually involves eating clay or dark dirt, which are often rich in minerals.

In the U.S., most reports of geophagy have come from the deep South, especially the Mississippi Delta. So, is it just coincidence that motocross is popular there? No word from THQ on whether or not eating dirt in the game will make your rider more healthy.

→Milestones

■ Oddly, Shiny's not directly involved with this sequel to *MDK*. (Remember, that team left to form Planet Moon, which is working on *Giants*.) Instead, Bioware (*Baldur's Gate*) is on the job

■ DREAMCAST
MDK 2

■ PLAYSTATION
TOMB RAIDER THE LAST REVELATION

■ After a rough-looking *Tomb Raider 3* debuted at E3 in May of '98, Eidos has patiently waited until now to show Lara's next quest. Taking place entirely in Egypt, the game will stream continuously without load times, and Lara is now a single-skinned model. It will be in stores this November

■ PLAYSTATION
TENCHU 2

■ This prequel to *Tenchu* will feature three selectable ninja characters, new tools and weapons, and a create-a-level mode

OMIKRON

■ Originally previewed a year ago August in NG44, French developer Quantic Dream's sci-fi adventure is getting closer to finished. The involved plot includes a run-in with Boz (above right). Boz is modeled to look like David Bowie, and is voiced by Bowie as well. Bowie will also contribute music to the game

VAMPIRE:
THE MASQUERADE

■ White Wolf's pen-and-paper game is getting fantastic treatment by the developers at Nihilistic, with more exotic creatures and better lighting effects in every screen

■ *Vampire* will feature an innovative story-teller mode for multiplayer action, enabling players to re-create a true role-playing experience

■ The player's party will never exceed four characters, but the roster varies. The game follows the tale of Christof, a medieval knight. Even in serious battle, players can drive the game entirely on the mouse

→ Milestones

NBA **SHOWTIME**

■ Midway's Dreamcast version of *NBA Showtime* won't be much more than a port, but from the early version we've played, it will be an arcade-perfect one

■ The old *NBA Jam* play mechanic still applies: players will leap high above the rim for larger-than-life dunks. But in the process of going 3D, the character models are more graceful and realistic than *Jam*'s cartoon look

READY 2 RUMBLE

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

■ Video Systems is bringing its stellar N64 racing background to Dreamcast in *F1 World Championship*, due this fall

■ Certainly the best way to play *R2R* is on Dreamcast, but PlayStation owners not yet ready to make that leap should find this version adequate, if not overtly flashy

FINAL FANTASY VIII

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FOR THE PLAYSTATION®

Dreamcast Arrives!

Sega's supersystem is almost here

On September 9, Sega's Dreamcast, the most powerful game console to date, will arrive in stores across North America. After a disappointing launch in Japan, Sega of America has been tireless in its efforts to ensure that the American introduction is backed by the strongest launch library in history — a steady stream of high-quality product through 2000 and beyond.

Has the company succeeded? Judge for yourself: across the next 26 pages, the staff of **Next Generation** has compiled the most comprehensive list anywhere of games coming for the system, with special attention paid to the 19 launch titles that will be available on the ninth. We've also run the system through its paces: our thorough review of Dreamcast — its power, its games, and its chances for success — is on page 52.

What's most exciting about Dreamcast — and the next-generation systems from Sony and Nintendo — is that their power will enable far superior games than present-day machines do: games that have better artificial intelligence; games that have more detailed environments and characters; games that are more immersive; games — ultimately — that continue to widen the lead between interactive entertainment and passive media.

Dreamcast is only the first step, but, as the games on the next pages show, it is a major one.

Rating the system

So here's the $199-dollar question: should you buy one?

Hardware Power

There's no question that Dreamcast is the most powerful console on the market today, period, and will remain so for at least the immediate future. Sega seems to have learned its lesson in delivering an underpowered system, and despite Dreamcast's off-the-shelf design, it sports a zippy 3D-intense CPU, an impressive PowerVR-based graphics chip, and a beefy 16MB of onboard RAM. Add in the largely untapped possibilities of the Visual Memory Unit and 56k modem, and you've got a console that's nothing to sneeze at (or even sniffle too loud).

The main complaint leveled at the system is that the controller sucks, at least for those of us with normal-sized hands and thumbs. Despite the VMU, it's still a holdover from the analog Saturn controller and isn't nearly as comfortable as it could be.

Still, overall the system works and works very well, and for the price, you can't beat it.

NextGen ★★★★☆

Marketing Muscle

If there's one thing Sega has traditionally known how to do and do well, it's advertise — even Saturn produced a few classic TV spots. This time around, Dreamcast practically speaks for itself, so the message shouldn't be hard to deliver.

The main question is whether Sega can shout loud enough to be heard. Both Sony and Nintendo are pouring major amounts of cash into pushing PlayStation and Donkey Kong 64 respectively. But Sega has been effective with fewer resources before, and it knows its audience well. This may be too close to call.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Current Software

While it could be argued that Dreamcast lacks any single killer app, the sheer number of titles available and their overall level of quality makes it the strongest launch lineup in the history of home consoles — and this despite not getting support from major publishers like Electronic Arts. There is, literally, something for everyone, and nearly all the titles are either better looking or better playing than what has been seen in their respective genres up until now. Titles like Capcom's Power Stone and Namco's Soul Calibur are jaw-dropping visual treats, while Sega Sports NFL 2K could very well revolutionize the way the sport is played at home.

The only problem is that with such a large number of titles, the mediocre middle will take a savvy consumer to negotiate. However, that's equally true of every other console on the market.

NextGen ★★★★☆

Future Software Prognosis

In some ways, this could be Dreamcast's Achilles' heel — in the face of more powerful consoles looming on the horizon, Dreamcast could start lagging behind the pack, fast. Looking further down the road, while almost everyone (even Sony stalwarts like Namco) was willing to do one Dreamcast title, the real question is: will they be willing to do two? With PlayStation 2 dev kits in the hands of most of the A teams in Japan, Europe, and the U.S., that's a tough question to answer. If Dreamcast doesn't do extremely well out of the gate, its holiday 2000 lineup may pale in comparison to the launch lineup — a recipe for a very short console lifespan.

Should the system sell well, however, Dreamcast will be on its second (or even third) generation of software by the time PlayStation 2 or Nintendo's Dolphin are out their first — the difference will likely be minimal, and would continue that way through 2001. But again, it depends entirely on whether the public will buy.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line:

"But," you say, "Should I buy a Dreamcast?"

In our most humble of opinions, "Hell yeah" — in fact, you'd be silly not to. There are a lot of terrific games (both available at launch and coming over the next year), the price tag is about the most reasonable a new system has ever debuted for, and even if some horrible, Titanic-scale disaster strikes Sega's marketing plan and it fizzles, you could at least have fun over the next year while saving up for, say, PlayStation 2 (which might not even get here before early 2001). Even in games beyond the ones previewed on the next 20 pages ever come out, at $199 Dreamcast is still a great purchase with a solid library. This is one of the biggest no-brainers in the history of home consoles. The timing and the price couldn't be better, and look at those games, huh?

NextGen ★★★★☆

→Win a Dreamcast

DC Arrives

Sega's so proud of having the first "128-bit" system on the market that the company has given us 128 prizes to give away. Want a Dreamcast or other Sega prize? Simply submit an entry to:

Next Generation's Win a Dreamcast Drawing
P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, CA, 94005. Winners will be chosen at random from the entries we receive by October 29, 1999.

Contest Rules

No purchase is necessary to win. To enter, mail in a 3x5 piece of paper with the following information: your name, age, address, phone number, and email address (if applicable). Mail entries to: Next Generation's Win a Dreamcast Contest, P.O. Box 418, Brisbane, CA 94005. Entries must be received no later than October 29, 1999. Winners will be chosen on or about November 1, 1999, and winners will be notified either by e-mail or by telephone.

A list of winners will be sent to anyone who requests it and who provides a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. Only one entry per household allowed. Imagine shall not be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries. Prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Imagine shall be final. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt, failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. In the event a prize winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded to a parent or legal guardian who will be required to sign the affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt. By acceptance of the prize, winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Imagine shall not be responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. Winners are responsible for paying income taxes on the value of the prize received (Each U.S. Dreamcast unit is valued at $199, each Dreamcast title is valued at $49, multiply this amount by total number of games awarded, each t-shirt is valued at $8.) Employees (and members of their immediate families) of Imagine Media, Inc., Affiliation Networks, Inc., Sega, and Access Public Relations are not eligible to participate. Void in States of Rhode Island, Florida, New York, and Washington and where prohibited by law.

There's no reason at all to buy a Dreamcast — if you're one of the winners of our 128-bit Win a Dreamcast Drawing.

FIRST PRIZE

10 WINNERS will receive a brand-new U.S. Dreamcast

SECOND PRIZE

10 WINNERS will receive each Sega-published launch title and Activision's *Blue Stinger*.

THIRD PRIZE

107 third-prize winners will receive a free Sega Dreamcast T-shirt.

That's only **127**? Right.

That's because one lucky grand-prize winner will receive **a boatload of Sega tchotzches** — T-shirts, pens, jackets, press releases, et cetera, in addition to **one brand-spanking-new Dreamcast and copies of the Sega-published launch titles.**

GRAND PRIZE

Sega Dreamcast

SEGA

sega.com

So break out a 33-cent stamp. This is one thing worth using snail mail for.

→ Peripherals

On the day of launch there will be quite a few first- and third-party peripherals on the shelf for you to outfit your Dreamcast with. From memory cards to (gasp) a light gun, there's plenty here that you're going to want. Here's what to expect when you enter your local software store:

Light Guns

While Sega refuses to bring out a light gun itself (even though it *is* publishing the only game that really supports the peripheral — go figure), third parties are working on several of their own. Unfortunately, as of press time, only Interact had one available to show. Mad Catz is said to have a light gun ready for launch as well, but it was unable to provide a picture.

1. Star Fire Light Blaster by Interact

Steering Controllers

With a huge number of racing games coming for Dreamcast, purists will want something better than the analog stick on the standard controller. Although Sega won't be marketing one of its own, several third parties all have controllers designed specifically for racing games.

6. Dream Wheel by Mad Catz
7. Radius Racing Pad by Interact
8. Rally Wheel by Agetec

Joysticks

For fighting games, joypads simply don't cut it, and a couple of high-quality arcade controllers will be available at launch. The downside? These sticks don't have any analog trigger or stick support, so they will only work for games that support the digital pad.

9. Alloy Arcade Stick by Interact
10. Arcade Stick by Agetec

Gamepads

The Dreamcast gamepad features both an analog stick and a digital pad. Four action buttons grace the front of the pad, and there are two analog triggers on the side. Some, like Mad Catz's gamepad, make small changes like six frontside buttons, which could be handy for certain types of games (like Capcom fighters). With four ports on the unit, but only one pad included in the box, buying extra gamepads will be a necessity.

2. Quantum Fighter Pad by Interact
3. Astro Pad by Performance
4. Dream Pad by Mad Catz
5. Dreamcast Gamepad by Sega

Memory Cards

Another necessity is a memory card. Sega's VMU (Visual Memory Unit) is the standard, with RAM for game saves as well as a LCD screen that can display mini-games or game info. Third-party cards range from budget offerings with no LCD screen to an expanded memory card with bonus features.

15. Extended Visual Memory Card by Performance
16. Visual Memory Unit by Sega
17. Basic Memory Card by Performance
18. Standard Visual Memory Card by Performance

Everything Else

With Dreamcast, there are a few accessories that defy categorization. We figure that the keyboard is better than the Power Glove.

13. Dreamcast Keyboard by Sega
14. Fishing Controller by Sega

The Jump Packs

There are those who prefer the extra little bit of immersion a rumbling controller can give them. The jump Pack (and clones) can be plugged into the second memory-card slot on your gamepad to give you a little shake whenever the game wants some more emphasis.

11. Tremor Pack by Performance
12. Jump Pack by Sega

Zip Drive

One of the more intriguing peripherals coming for the system is a Dreamcast-compatible Iomega Zip drive. In case you've been living under a rock, the Zip drive, which uses a removable disc that can hold 100MB of data, has become practically standard equipment on PCs these days. Although plans for its use with Dreamcast are sketchy at best — so far not even a price has been announced (PC Zip drives range from $79-$100). When coupled with the modem, a Zip drive would offer a place to store downloaded game levels and characters, or any other information (pictures, text files, music, etc.) that comes from the Dreamcast web browser. Certainly, it's one to watch for.

Getting Connected

Like every next-generation system, Dreamcast (with the help of a few third parties) gives you a lot of options for getting the most out of its picture and sound. So how do you do that? Well...

RCA composite A/V Cables

Infinitely preferable to RF, A/V plugs are now the standard and are what will come with your Dreamcast. These let you treat your console like any other entertainment center equipment — VCR, DVD player, tape deck — and hook it either straight into the TV or into an auxiliary input on your home theater A/V receiver (which would be preferred — nothing like surround sound to heighten the gaming experience). The A/V Cable is the new standard for audio/video connectivity and is also available from Interact. This is what most people will use.

1. Standard A/V Cables

S-Video cables

Both Sega and a number of third parties sell a variant of A/V cables with an S-video ("S" stands for "super," believe it or not), rather than standard composite video, plug. If you've got an S-video compatible TV, then by all means, get a set of Dreamcast S-video cables — the high-resolution images Dreamcast puts out benefit tremendously from S-video's 400 lines of vertical resolution (as opposed to 320 for composite), with far sharper colors and truer black levels as well.

3. Sega, Pelican, and Interact all offer standard S-Video cables. If your TV supports S-Video, there's no excuse for not using these cables.

4. The Mad Catz Cable is unique in that it supports both S-Video and A/V.

RF modulator

The lowest end: this is how everyone used to connect up a game system to a TV back in the 8-bit days. Plug it into the same connector your cable goes into, with the sound coming from the TV speaker and an image full of bleeding colors. Yuck.

5. RF switch by Sega
6. RFU Adapter by Performance
7. RF Switch by Mad Catz

VGA adapter

Only available in the U.S. by direct mail off Sega's web site (it was priced at about $80 in Japan — no word yet on its cost here), this handy gadget outputs the Dreamcast video as a true 640x480 VGA signal for display on a computer monitor. This is as sharp and colorful as the image can possibly be, although it does mean having a smaller screen than your average TV in any case. It's great for desktop or dorm-room setup. The VGA box also supports standard A/V and S-Video outputs, so this is the connector to get for those who always want the best possible picture.

2. The VGA box by Sega

How long does Dreamcast have?

When it's released on September 9, Dreamcast will be certainly be the most powerful home console ever. But for how long? Sony has already started manufacturing its Emotion Engine chips and PlayStation 2 should be shown publicly for the first time in Tokyo exactly a week after the U.S. launch. Given the awesome specs of PlayStation 2 — six million triangles a second, with all effects turned on, versus one million for Dreamcast — how long can Sega's system stay competitive?

While there's no answer to that question yet, the answer may be longer than you think.

For instance, assuming all polygons are the minimum size, Dreamcast could drive a 60fps game made solely of lit-pixel triangles. PlayStation 2 could drive the same game with 3-pixel polys. That sounds a lot better, but in the real world, there will certainly be many polygons onscreen that are larger in size, meaning the both systems should have more-than-large-enough polygon budgets, per frame, to do extremely detailed graphics.

And while PlayStation 2 will be able to do things like algorithmically distort characters' faces to simulate emotions and facial expressions, Dreamcast developers will be able to "cheat" and do the same thing with textures (which is already done in Ready 2 Rumble and NFL XO. At least for the first

generation of software (and probably the second), Dreamcast should be able to deliver graphics that come so close to PlayStation 2 as to not make a difference — Tokyo Xtreme Racing, for instance, looks almost indistinguishable from the PlayStation 2 Gran Turismo demos.

But the reality is that at some point, PlayStation 2 will start to outpace Dreamcast, no matter what tricks developers use. As developers get up to speed on PlayStation 2, they will be able to produce effects that simply can't be matched on Dreamcast. In the end, how long Dreamcast's graphics will

be cutting-edge depends on how fast developers can master PlayStation 2.

Ultimately, texture maps are no substitute for the real detail of polygons, and as developers move to finer and more detailed polygon models, Dreamcast will simply be outpaced. Curved-surface engines coming from middleware developers will also soon be able to produce effects not found on Dreamcast.

How long does Dreamcast have at the top of the console heap? We'll be able to better answer that question after we see PlayStation 2 in Tokyo next month.
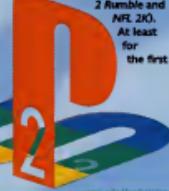
Under the Hood

DC Arrives

1. Hitachi SH4 CPU
2. NEC/VideoLogic CLX1 graphics chip
3. Yamaha AICA sound chip
4. 16MB main operating RAM
5. 8MB video RAM (VRAM)
6. 2MB audio RAM
7. Boot ROM
8. 128KB Flash RAM
9. Video encoding processor
10. GD-ROM Drive
11. Power supply (120V Japanese specification)
12. Modem
13. Liquid cooling system

■ Besides being the Dreamcast system (seen at launch – see page 66 for a comparison), Dreamcast also boasts a modem, 26 MB of RAM and even a liquid cooling system to prevent overheating without using a fan

The 10 titles you must buy

With the largest launch lineup of any system ever released, new Dreamcast owners are going to be hard-pressed to choose which games to take home with them. Next Generation will be among the first in line for the new system — sleeping bags in tow, laptops running *EverQuest* on wireless modems, and enough Mountain Dew on hand to revive an elephant. What games could be so exciting that we would make such a sacrifice? The following are Next Generation's top 10 reasons to pull an all-nighter and be the first ones on September 9 to have a Dreamcast.

1. Ready 2 Rumble
2. Soul Calibur
3. Sega Sports NFL 2K
4. Power Stone
5. Sonic Adventure
6. NFL Blitz 2000
7. TrickStyle
8. Blue Stinger
9. Hydro Thunder
10. Aerowings

Dead Or Alive 2
■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Tecmo**

■ This Naomi fighter is virtually guaranteed to come home, and when it does, expect it to visually outshine anything else available on the system. With a new tag-team mode and multiple levels of playing field, it should offer what no other 3D fighter has before.
The Hook: While the first was a sleeper, the sequel looks absolutely amazing and is a shoo-in for success. We've never seen a fighter quite like this.

Frame Gride
■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **From Software**

■ While this closely resembles From's earlier mech-combat game *Armored Core*, the leap in graphical clarity along with some gameplay tweaks make this a unique entry.
The Hook: *Armored Core* was a blast to play, and this looks to be even better. From is becoming a major development force, and we can't wait to play this.

King of Fighters '99 Dream Bout
■ Release date: Q4 1999

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **SNK**

■ The latest in SNK's popular series of fighters features 3D action with 38 different fighters to choose from and all-new 3D backdrops.
The Hook: Hopefully the RAM in Dreamcast will enable players to switch among characters with no load times — otherwise even hardcore fans of the arcade game may shy away from this one.

→ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ This is the best and bloodiest *Mortal Kombat* to ever come home, but can it compete with *Soul Calibur*?

■ Release date: **Launch**

Mortal Kombat 4 Gold

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Eurocom**

→ Midway releases yet another update to its *Mortal Kombat* franchise. Rather than retool the game from scratch for Dreamcast, it has taken an older version of the game and added new characters. Visually, the game looks better than it ever has, with high-resolution graphics and a framerate of 60fps. Unfortunately, compared to newer games like *Soul Calibur*, the game is starting to show its age. Still, for those who have been craving an arcade-perfect version of *MK4* (it *has* been out for two years now), this could be just the ticket — and the addition of several *MK1*, *2*, and *3* favorites will no doubt keep the fans happy until a true sequel is made.
The Hook: This franchise has lost steam, but if you're one of those two people who still tingles at the word "fatality," this 3D update will satisfy.

Marvel Superheroes vs. Capcom

■ Release date: **October 1999**

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

■ The most animation-intensive 2D fighting game to ever hit a home console.
The Hook: Capcom's 2D fighting-game fans are a breed unto themselves, and this arcade-perfect port will satisfy even the most jaded among them.

Psychic Force 2012

■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Taito**

■ This fighting game takes place in an actual 3D cube where players can move along all three axis. A variety of hand-to-hand and psychic moves round out the gameplay.
The Hook: Although the concept is neat, it doesn't really provide enough depth. No U.S. publisher has stepped forward to claim this title yet, so we don't know if there will be any changes.

➜ Dreamcast Launch Title

■ Power Stone features a dynamic fighting environment which must be used effectively to win

■ Release date: **Launch**

Power Stone

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

Capcom takes its 2D experience and throws it completely out the window in this 3D fighting game. Featuring a cast of totally original characters, Power Stone is the first fighting game that features entirely 3D battles as well as a fully interactive environment. This means that not only are you free to run around each of the lushly detailed levels, but you can also hang, jump, and climb on every fixture. Weapons also litter the battle areas in the form of crates, barrels, and other odds and ends that can be kicked or thrown. The result is a frenetic battle where you must always be on your guard.
The Hook: Even though it hasn't sold well in Japan, every U.S. appearance this game has made been marked by throngs of salivating fans — Next Gen staffers among them (just see our review, page 82). This deserves to be the next big thing.

→ Fighting

Street Fighter Alpha 3
■ Release date: Winter 1999

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

■ An arcade-perfect port of what many consider to be the best *Street Fighter* game ever made, with plenty of new modes and characters added for the home release.

The Hook: Capcom's 2D fighting game fans are a breed unto themselves, and this arcade-perfect port will satisfy even the most jaded among them (yes, we know we're repeating ourselves).

Virtua Fighter 3tb
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Genki**

■ *Virtua Fighter* remains one of the most sophisticated and deep fighting-game series ever. Since Sega is holding back this title to add a new "versus mode" and graphical tweaks.

The Hook: Whenever it goes on sale, this will be the most comprehensive fighting game you can buy.

Virtua On: Oratorio Tangram
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

■ This giant-robot fighting game is the sequel to the arcade mega-hit *Virtua On*, but this time around, it has Model 3 graphics.

The Hook: If this game supports the modem, it could be one of the best multiplayer experiences that Dreamcast has to offer. If it doesn't, split-screen and single-player hardly satisfy.

■ Release date: **Launch**

Ready 2 Rumble

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Midway**

→ Easily one of the most popular games at E3, *Ready 2 Rumble* has become the surprise champion of the Dreamcast launch lineup. Featuring great graphics, tight controls, a slick 60fps framerate, and a cast of outlandish boxers, this is the boxing game we've been waiting for these last several years. Besides an excellent fighting engine (which is the core of the game), *Ready 2 Rumble* also features a deep managerial mode

in which you must sign and train boxers in your own custom-made gym. Your goal? To possess all three of the title belts at once. Industry insiders and gamers alike have been busting after this game since it has been first shown, and it deserves to be a big hit.

Right Hook: It's fast, it's fun, it's unique — it's next generation in every sense of the term. This is exactly the kind of game you buy a new system for.

→ Dreamcast Launch Title

■ *Ready 2 Rumble* is the first boxing game in recent memory to not only look good, but play well too

■ The lush visuals in *Soul Calibur* prove that, once again, Namco is at the top of its game

■ Release date: **Launch**

Soul Calibur

■ Publisher: **Namco**   ■ Developer: **Namco**

➡ "I'm shocked." That was one developer's reaction to PlayStation stalwart Namco's decision to bring a game to Dreamcast. What shouldn't be shocking, given

Namco's reputation, is that it looks — and plays — so good. True to form, Namco has made significant improvements to the arcade version of this weapons fighter for Dreamcast. Not only is

the animation more fluid, but the textures are higher-res, and the gameplay has been extensively tweaked to improve the balance in the title. The addition of new modes (and characters, if rumors are correct) means that not only is Namco delivering a graphic showcase for the system, but it's one that should be among the best fighting games available anywhere — at home

or in the arcade. The fact that *Soul Calibur* is optimized for four-button control means that it works great with Dreamcast's standard controler as well (unlike Capcom's 2D fighters, which need an arcade stick to be playable).

The Hook: The graphics showcase for Dreamcast, this is as drop-dead gorgeous as they come. It plays like a dream, too.

It begins....

Sega kicked off its marketing campaign on June 28 with three different "teaser" ads. The catch phrase for the campaign is "It's Thinking" — evoking a definite sense of mystery and "coolness" — but each commercial also has its own unique line to pique the viewer's curiosity. While we won't argue that the commercials aren't exciting, we still must chide Sega for not including a single gameplay screen.

Anxiety
■ "Don't think out loud. It might hear you"

REM
■ "Outsmarting it will only make it smarter"

Claustro
■ "You know it's alive. Worse. It knows it's alive"

Alone in the Dark 4
■ Release date: Q4 2000

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Infogrames Europe**

■ As those who remember the original would expect, this title brings back scary environments populated with nightmarish monsters. As this PC screenshot shows, both characters and backgrounds will be fully 3D.
The Hook: A venerable series, but its fan base has long since defected to *Resident Evil*. It remains to be seen whether this iteration can successfully go up against younger, hungrier *Code: Veronica*.

Baldur's Gate
■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

■ This hardcore RPG features the *AD&D* license and built-in online play. Sega is actually handling the conversion itself to ensure multiplayer compatibility with the Dreamcast modem. *(PC screen)*
The Hook: This title is extremely popular on PC, and, with the multiplayer support, it could be the distinguishing hook many people are looking for to buy a Dreamcast.

Carrier
■ Release date: November 1999

■ Publisher: **Jaleco** ■ Developer: **Jaleco**

■ A *Resident Evil*-style thriller based on an aircraft carrier infested with a killer virus and, you guessed it, zombies.
The Hook: Although we don't expect Capcom's high production values, this title may be just enough to tide you over until *Veronica* ships next year.

■ Release date: Launch

Blue Stinger

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Climax Graphics**

This action/adventure game was hyped big in Japan but felt flat due to strange game balancing and the absolute worst camera control ever put in a game. Activision has picked this title up for domestic release and is hard at work correcting the camera and other issues (such as boss difficulty) so that gamers can see that the underlying game is actually quite fun. Gameplay is a cross between *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil* — you play three different characters who must fight off an alien menace on a small island in third person. The game features tons of plot twists and areas, big weapons to splatter aliens with, and some true next-generation visuals for those who delve deeper into the game.
The Hook: If Activision can fix the nausea-inducing camera system that plagued the Japanese release (and Activision did it before with *Tenchu*), this could be the first must-have Dreamcast action/adventure in the U.S.

ENEMY

DOGS   GATLING GUN x5

→ Dreamcast Launch Title
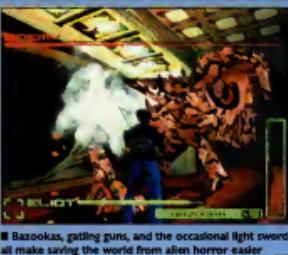
■ Bazookas, gatling guns, and the occasional light sword all make saving the world from alien horror easier

Climax Landers

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Climax

This RPG has been shown along with Dreamcast since the earliest announcements. It sports some great graphics and even some VMU mini-games.
The Hook: This game has been delayed quite a bit in Japan, but hopes are still high. If the plot and gameplay can live up to the hype, this could the first solid RPG experience on the system.

D2

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Warp

Much-hyped but infinitely delayed sequel to the sleeper hit D. This time, instead of horror-themed elements, it is a realtime 3D action title with RPG elements.
The Hook: The development of this game has spanned three years and at least as many systems, and our hopes for it dim with every passing minute.

Dark Angel

■ Release date: Winter 1999

■ Publisher: Metro3D ■ Developer: Metro3D

This realtime fantasy RPG (read: no turn-based combat or menu systems) places you in the role of Anna, who is searching for a cure to save her ailing people. Dark Angel also promises a dynamic world that will change as Anna gains experience.
The Hook: A good RPG takes time to build, and as this one is scheduled to be available before the holiday season, hopefully it won't be rushed to market.

Draconus: Cult of the Wyrm

■ Release date: November 1999

■ Publisher: Crave ■ Developer: Treyarch

Another sword-slashing epic from the creators of Die by the Sword. They've got the combat down and are working hard to nail the adventure elements this time around. For a full preview, see page 34.
The Hook: A great-looking sword-and-sorcery title with a deep combat system and a strong RPG flavor is always welcome among the hardcore.

Ecco the Dolphin

■ Release date: Q1 2000

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Appaloosa

Once again you get to take control of Ecco as he explores the underwater realm, only this time with some lush 3D visuals.
The Hook: The original Ecco is remembered fondly, and the early build of this game we've seen could pass for a technology demo. This is the kind of unique title Sega needs in order to stand above the rest.

Frontier

■ Release date: TBA

NO GAME SCREEN AVAILABLE

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Turbine Games

Sega is keeping mum about this persistent-world, online sci-fi adventure. We do know that it's being developed by the same group behind Asheron's Call, and it will feature realtime night and day environments.
The Hook: If DC's modem and first online game prove worthy, worlds that were formerly the elite stomping ground of PC owners may open up to the masses. It will be interesting to see how PC Hobbits react to the hordes of console barbarians mucking up the Shire.

Galleon

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher: Interplay ■ Developer: Confounding Factor

The creators of Tomb Raider I (the best one) return with a new character in a swashbuckling pirate action/adventure. [PC screen]
Captain Hook: Who doesn't want to be a pirate?

Outcast

■ Release date: Spring 2000

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Appeal

A dauntingly huge third-person adventure game than spans multiple alien worlds, its innovative voxel technology should make it stand out on Dreamcast. [PC screen]
The Hook: This sci-fi epic has been forever in coming to PC, and it looks less and less impressive each time we see it. Can Dreamcast give it a new lease on life!

Resident Evil – Code: Veronica

■ Release date: Spring 2000

■ Publisher: Capcom ■ Developer: Capcom

It's Resident Evil, it's Dreamcast. Realtime 3D environments, high-polygon zombies, and a deliciously frightening story — do you need really to know anything else?
The Hook: This was the series that put PlayStation on the map, and if any game can do it for Dreamcast, this is it. With a glut of action/adventure games, expect Capcom to push the envelope again.

►Adventure/RPG

Shenmue
■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Sega**

■ *Shenmue* has hundreds of realtime 3D characters, acres of navigable terrain, a deep and involving story, and gameplay descriptions that change every time we hear about it.
The Hook: Described as everything from *Virtua Fighter RPG* to a 128-bit *Dragon's Lair*, Yu Suzuki's magnum opus — whatever it may turn out to actually be — will either be a brilliant achievement or a miserable failure.

Undercover
■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Pulse**

■ This sci-fi thriller uses pre-set cameras to achieve an almost *Resident Evil* style of gameplay.
The Hook: It is still unknown whether or not this title will be U.S.-bound. With its slick look and multiplayer action, it should be a natural, though.

Try 'n' Buy
■ Dreamcast's point-of-purchase kiosk looks, well, pretty much like you'd expect it to look. Coming soon to a retailer near you, with running demos of Dreamcast software.
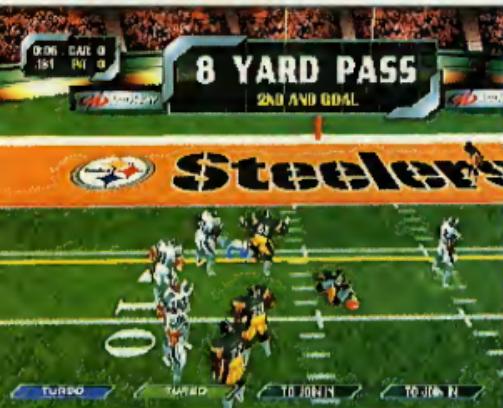
►Sports

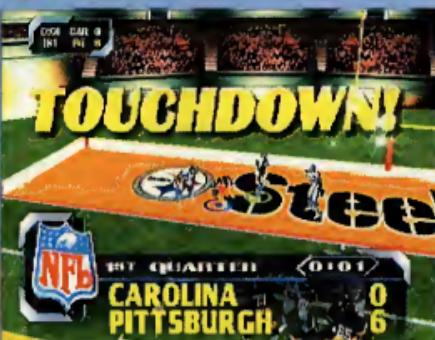■ Release date: **Launch**

NFL Blitz 2000

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Avalanche**

■ Midway — and, more specifically, series creator Mark Turmell — knows more about making good arcade sports titles than anyone on the planet. It shows in *Blitz*

Blitz is one of the few arcade games that has had any success at all in the last year. Combining football with a no-penalties free-for-all attitude, *Blitz 2000* will probably be just as popular at home. Graphically, the game is a dead ringer for its arcade counterpart, so players will feel right at home the instant they pick up the controller. The 2000 version also features many new additions not found in the arcade, such as team-

customized playbooks and players scaled to their correct size and weight. Star players will have been tweaked as well to reflect their own special skills in real life. Come the system launch in September, *Blitz 2000* will have what it takes to bring the arcade experience home.
The Hook: This is the most popular arcade sports series in years, and the Dreamcast version is even better than the arcade. 'Nuff said.

Cool Boarders DC

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **UEP Systems**

■ The title will change for the U.S. (UEP gave Sony the rights to the name), but fans of the series know what to expect, except now it'll have better graphics.
The Hook: These guys invented snowboarding games. Unfortunately, with tough competition from Housemarque, among others, they will be hard-pressed to come out on top.

Konami Baseball

■ Release date: TBA

NO GAME SCREEN AVAILABLE

■ Publisher **Konami** ■ Developer **Konami**

■ Konami will take you out to the ballgame sometime in 2000. We're thinking it's going to be with the Major League Baseball license, but no one's saying yet.
The Hook: The Japanese have a penchant for taking American product and making it better, and so it has been with the digital versions of our country's great pastime. Hopefully Konami can rival Sega's past efforts with *World Series Baseball*.

Konami NBA Basketball

■ Release date: TBA

NO GAME SCREEN AVAILABLE

■ Publisher **Konami** ■ Developer **Konami**

■ Little more is known about this game other than that it will have an NBA license, it's due for release sometime in 2000, and a Konami spokesperson has said that it is "unlikely" that it's going to be a continuation of the company's *In The Zone* franchise.
The Hook: Considering how well Sega's hoop game is coming along, this one, when finally shown, will need to look just as good and play even better.

NBA Showtime

■ Release date: December 1999

■ Publisher **Midway** ■ Developer **Midway**

■ This 1999 update to NBA Jam proves that two-on-two basketball can still be a blast to play when done right.
The Hook: The game's pedigree alone speaks volumes — the lead designer is arcade sports legend Mark Turmell, the man behind the original *NBA Jam* and *NFL Blitz*.

Quarterback Club 2000
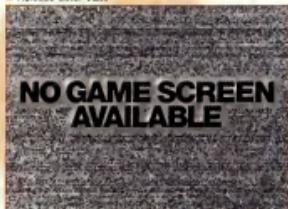
■ Release date: October 1999

■ Publisher **Acclaim** ■ Developer **Iguana**

■ Acclaim's football franchise looks better every year, and on Dreamcast, the new models and animations should accelerate that. But can it compete with Sega's brilliant *NFL 2K*?
The Hook: Acclaim will win or lose the battle with Sega on gameplay alone. All the sports titles will look great, but for gamers to stay up, they need to play great, too.

Sega Bass Fishing

■ Release date: Fall 1999

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Sega**

■ Fishing may not fit into the hardcore gaming category, but this game proves that solid gameplay, excellent graphics, and a unique controller can create a great gaming experience. Part action, part RPG, and all about killing large chunks of time, just like real life. Hook, line, and sinker: Yes, it's fishing, but it's oh so brilliant. Really. No, really. See our review on page 84 for proof.

Sega Sports NBA 2K

■ Release date: November 1999

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Sega**

■ Sega's second sports title looks to be just as impressive as *NFL 2K*. Success may be in the details: you can see individual players' facial expressions, the refs, the bench, and even the scoring table. It plays well, too, even at an early stage of development.
The Hook: What *NFL 2K* is to football, *NBA 2K* should be to basketball: the pinnacle of the sport.

Sega Sports NHL 2K

■ Release date: TBA

NO GAME SCREEN AVAILABLE

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Black Box**

■ Perhaps the worst-kept secret at Sega, this hockey title is under development by several former Radical Entertainment employees, who created Virgin's fantastic NHL game for Saturn.
The Hook: Hockey never seems to get the credit it deserves. With no EA title to fall back on, this one needs to do what Radical did for the Saturn all over again.

Supreme Snowboarding

■ Release date: November 1999

■ Publisher **Infogrames** ■ Developer **Housemarque**

■ This PC port brings *SF Rush* gameplay to snowboarding — huge air and massive stunts in super-detailed environments, which are far more sophisticated than typical console fare. [PC screen]
The Hook: Housemarque can deliver the graphics and physics, but snowboarding games need more — licensed boards, riders, and killer music — to rise above the pack.

Wild Water World Championship

■ Release date: Winter 1999

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Promethean**

■ A cross between wacky racers and *Mario Kart*, but on the water. *[PC screen]*

The Hook: Well, every system needs its *Mario Kart* games, and with an aquatic twist, this could be fun.

How expensive is Dreamcast?

Dreamcast will cost $199. How does that stack up against other consoles? Below, we've printed the release dates and launch prices of some of the most successful consoles ever, as well as their prices in June, 1999 dollars.

Date	System	Then	In 1999 dollars
1977	Atari 2600	$199	$545.77
1979	Intellivision	$299	$684.49
1982	Colecovision	$199.95	$344.37
1985	NES	$159	$245.59
1989	Genesis	$189	$253.32
1991	Super NES	$199	$242.83
1995	PlayStation	$299	$326.07
1996	Nintendo 64	$199	$210.80
1999	Dreamcast	$199	$199.00

■ Release date: **Launch**

Sega Sports NFL 2K

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Visual Concepts**

→ Sports gamers were salivating over this title at E3, and for good reason, as everything is coming into place nicely for Sega's first-party football sim.

Visual Concepts has started this title from scratch, and it's been two years in the making. Everything about the title screams "next-generation software," from the noticeably massive and beautifully rendered 3D stadiums and dynamic weather effects to subtleties such as Miami QB Dan Marino's custom boots modeled onto his likeness.

The gameplay has been considerably stepped up, as the game runs at 60fps, and with more than 1,500 animations, the running, passing, and hard-hitting of the NFL are more lifelike than ever. This is partly due to the fact that on-field players have all been modeled true to scale, and position-based motion-capture sessions add distinctive movements to the lineman and backs. Coupled with a 3D collision system and advanced ball-handling animations, the game has never looked, or played, more realistically.

The Hook: Sega's spent millions on this game — it will probably lose money — but VC has delivered; this will quite possibly be the best football game of all time. (At least until next year...)

→ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ More motion capture has been used than in any other sports game, creating the most lifelike visuals yet

→Racing

→Dreamcast Launch Title

■ From lush jungles to a sunken cruise liner, *Hydro Thunder*'s tracks never cease to amaze with their variety and beauty. Too bad you have to fly by all the scenery at such insane speeds

■ Release date: **Launch**

Hydro Thunder

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Eurocom**

The arcade version of this boat-racing title has proven to be extremely popular, and this home conversion looks virtually identical. Race futuristic speedboats across a wide variety of tracks covering everything from the Nile to a post-apocalyptic New York. Much like *San Francisco Rush*, tracks all feature a variety of shortcuts and incredible jumps to keep the spectacle high. The Dreamcast port will feature split-screen multiplayer and at least one new track so that arcade fans will find something new.
The Hook: It's *SF Rush* on water — great graphics, great tracks. Need we say more?

Metropolis Street Racing

■ Release date: **Winter 1999**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Bizarre Creations**

■ **MSR gives you the opportunity to drive dozens of licensed cars through some of the most famous cities in the world, all rendered with exacting levels of detail. The Hook: The detail is unbelievable, but the early demo shown at E3 needed work. The jury's still out on this one.**

Roadsters

■ Release date: **November 1999**

■ Publisher: **Titus** ■ Developer: **Player 1**

■ **This racing game seems modeled after *San Francisco Rush* with high speeds and lots of jumps. The Hook: It looks good, and we all like to catch some air, but it remains to be seen how the game will fare facing some tough competition against the other arcade racers being introduced this year.**

Sega Rally 2

■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

■ **Sega's second installment of its *Rally* series features improved graphics and the same rock-solid gameplay that made the first so popular. The Hook: The Japanese version featured framerate problems that Sega originally will be fixed by the time of the U.S. release. If so, the internet multiplayer alone might be enough to hook racing fans.**

→ Racing

Speed Devils

■ Release date: **October 1999**

■ Publisher: Ubi Soft   ■ Developer: Ubi Soft

An arcade racer with a cartoony feel, which has a huge variety of tracks to race on, all of which feature loads of shortcuts and random animations.

The Hook: There are many arcade racers coming to Dreamcast, but *Speed Devils* looks like it will at least hold its own and possibly surprise those who weren't impressed with its PC cousin *Speed Busters*.

Suzuki Allstar Racing

■ Release date: **Q4 1999**

■ Publisher: Ubi Soft   ■ Developer: Criterion

Compete against the computer or a friend in several different racing modes in this motorcycle-racing game.

The Hook: This game came out in Japan, where, due to funky control, mediocre graphics, and sub-par sound, it has been panned. Unfortunately, the U.S. version doesn't hold much hope for improvement.

The Dream Team

The key executives supporting Bernie Stolar's Dreamcast launch efforts are (left to right):

Neal Robison,	Group Director, Third Party Licensing
Chris Gilbert,	Senior Vice President, Sales
Peter Moore,	Senior Vice President, Marketing
Mr. Okawa,	Chairman of CSK
Mr. Kezuka,	Deputy Chairman of Sega of America
Mr. Irimajiri,	President of Sega Enterprises, Inc.

→ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ Release date: **Launch**

CART Racing

■ Publisher: **Sega of America**   ■ Developer: **Sega**

→ Carrying an official license from the premier U.S. open-wheel league, *CART Racing* gives players the opportunity to race as any of the sport's 27 drivers on all 19 of its courses, which range from permanent tracks such as the Laguna Seca speedway to street-based venues in Long Beach and Ontario, Canada.

The game's championship mode lets you participate in a re-creation of the 1998 CART season, while the arcade mode offers the ability to race any of the game's courses either solo or head-to-head against a friend. A traditional time-attack mode is also in place for bettering your best lap time at each venue.

The Hook: Although it's short on bells and whistles, you can't go wrong with this title if you're looking for a solid sim — this is the only open-wheel racer with a license on the system.

→ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ Release date: **Launch**

Monaco Grand Prix

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft**   ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft**

→ Just because this game is unlicensed doesn't mean Ubi won't be adding the serious depth that Grand Prix fans demand. The game will also feature online multiplay for up to 12 players at once, as well as other Dreamcast-specific features: specular highlights on the cars, weather and smoke effects, 19 music tracks, and, of course, all new rendered cut scenes.

Make no mistakes, this is definitely a sim — with realism, not ease of use, as the primary goal — so serious players will want to pick up a third-party wheel (Sega won't be selling one of its own) before they attempt to tackle what Ubi promises will be the deepest racer on Dreamcast.

The Hook: Grand Prix racing isn't nearly as big here as it is in Europe, but fans who are looking for depth and complexity will certainly find it in this title.

Tokyo Xtreme Racing

■ Publisher **Crave**   ■ Developer: **Genki**

This Dreamcast racer is a cross between arcade and sim. Race more than a dozen different cars over accurately modeled Tokyo highways. To start a race, you pull up behind an opponent and flash your brights (or vice versa) and then you take off. What makes the game unique is the other traffic on the highway that you must bob and weave through as you fight to get ahead of your opponent. The winner can improve their cars and then challenge other opponents. So far, the graphics are the most impressive aspect of the game, with the replay mode actually rivaling some of the *Gran Turismo* PSX 2 footage we have seen. The Japanese version of the game (*Shutokou Highway Battle*) is reviewed on page 83, but Crave is making a few changes for the U.S. version of the game.

Hook: The racing style is different from any other Dreamcast racer, but it remains to be seen whether U.S. gamers will appreciate racing on a Tokyo turnpike.

❖ Dreamcast Launch Title

■ The fastest-selling Dreamcast title in Japan since the system's launch, this arcade racer with a Tokyo twist showcases the console's awesome graphical prowess

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Test Drive 6
■ Release date: **Winter 1999**

■ Publisher **Infogrames US** ■ Developer **Pitbull Syndicate**

■ The *Test Drive* series goes to Paris, New York, Italy and London, with obvious graphic enhancements, new AI, physics models, and over 40 licensed cars.
The Hook: Apart from *Sega Rally*, this is the only long-running racing series to appear on Dreamcast. The Dreamcast enhancements certainly make it worthy of a closer look, which you can get on page 26.

TNN Motosports HardCore Heat
■ Release date: **October 1999**

■ Publisher **ASC Games** ■ Developer **CRI**

■ A cross-country racer in the tradition of ASC's 4x4 series, enhanced with a new, hyper-realistic physics model.
The Hook: The TNN license should drive this title to success with casual gamers — it has so far — but it remains to be seen whether ASC can fix the control problems we found in early versions.

Xleration
■ Release date: **Fall 1999**

■ Publisher **TBA** ■ Developer **Kalisto**

■ This arcade racer is part rally racing, part street racing, with tracks varying from small indoor-arena circuits to expansive open-road courses. Races will feature up to seven cars, and there will be a split-screen two-player mode that runs at 60fps.
The Hook: It already looks good, and as long as this title keeps from becoming a sterile racer like so many PC imitators, *Xleration* should find a home in the U.S.

→ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

With a focus on technique instead of combat, *Aerowings* provides a breath of fresh air to a genre that has been plagued by repetition

■ Release date: **Launch**

Aerowings

■ Publisher: **Crave** ■ Developer: **CRI**

A different approach for flight sims (especially on consoles), *Aerowings* puts you in the cockpit of a stunt pilot working with the Blue Impulse (Japan's version of the Blue Angels). You must first master the intricacies of flying each plane; then you attempt to perform intense acrobatic maneuvers, both solo and as part of a group. The control is complex — probably too complex for casual gamers, but ultimately rewarding for those who put the practice in to do some of the more complicated maneuvers. The graphics are highly detailed, much better, in fact, than in most PC sims. Crave is doing the localization for this one, and the company promises that high-quality voice actors and translation will keep the experience intact.

The Hook: We dug the Japanese version without even understanding half the text or being able to shoot anything down. An English version is a sure thing.

Castlevania: Resurrection
■ Release date: **Winter 1999**

■ Publisher **Konami** ■ Developer **Konami**

■ A third-person, 3D rendition of the classic series, but unlike the disappointing N64 version, the emphasis will be action and combat, not exploration.
The Hook: With the added power of Dreamcast, Konami may find the winning formula to finally do this series justice in 3D. (For the full story, see our preview on page 18.)

Chakan
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer **AndNow**

■ The undead hero of Genesis is returning, but for a while it was rumored that this dual-sword-wielder was close to being axed himself when Sega was cutting titles. It looks like "the forever man" will see daylight, but it probably won't happen before the end of the year. The Hook: Moody and dark, Chakan is a character who's a perfect fit for 3D action/adventure. We hope this will impress more than the Genesis outing.

Crazy Taxi
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer **Sega**

■ This wacky mission-based San Francisco racer is done and on the shelf — Sega won't release the home version until the coin drop dries up in the arcade. The Hook: It's hot in the arcade, but if the Dreamcast version is a straight port, it may lack the depth for a successful home experience.

Deep Fighter
■ Release date: **Q1 2000**

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Criterion**

■ 3D dog-fighting with subs is the name of the game in this ethereal underwater shooter, which features five different environments and multiple mission types. *[PC screen]*
The Hook: Developed by Criterion, the game should be a graphics showcase, if the team can make underwater dog-fighting exciting.

Dynamite Cop 2
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

■ The sequel to *Die Hard Arcade*, this 3D beat-'em-up features highly interactive environments and plenty of flashy gadgets to pick up and whomp enemies with. **The Hook:** As we said in our review of the Japanese version on page 83, this was the last of the Model 2 arcade titles to be ported, and it's showing its age.

Expendable
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Rage**

■ A third-person shooter with flashy graphics and sound. Gameplay consists of running around and blowing stuff up. That's about it. (See our review of the Japanese version of the game on page 84.)
What hook? While the game is certainly pretty, there isn't a whole lot of depth to keep you playing for long.

■ Release date: **Launch**

Air Force Delta

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami**

With *Castlevania* delayed, Konami is depending on this title to make an impact at launch. Similar in many ways to *Ace Combat*, *Air Force Delta* casts you in the role of a fighter pilot trying to take out targets on a variety of different missions ranging from land-based targets to assaults on a naval fleet. Of course, there is also a big emphasis on dogfighting with enemy pilots to keep the game challenging. There are several planes you can earn along the way, each suited for a distinct mission type. This is a different type of game for Konami, but it has all of the gameplay hooks we've come to expect. Early demos of the game looked great and had an arcade feel.
The Hook: Call it *Ace Combat* for Dreamcast, but this is the only available flight-combat game this season.

➡ **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ While the pacing isn't lightning fast, intensity comes from the feel you get in the middle of a giant battle

→Action

Fighting Force 2
■ Release date: **Q4 1999**

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Core Design**
■ Leading bruiser Hawk Manson returns in this sequel to the 32-bit beat-'em-up. The design, however, takes a *Metal Gear* approach, requiring players to use stealth in some situations. Still, there's also plenty of the hand-to-hand chop-socky action of the first game, too.
The Hook: Adding some strategic elements to *Fighting Force* should bring refreshing depth to the gameplay, something this genre has lacked for some time.

Floigan Bros.
■ Release date: **Spring 2000**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Visual Concepts**
■ This offbeat platformer starring junk dealers Hoigal and Moigal Floigan combines 30 game environments with artificial-life gameplay challenges. Players control Hoigal, the small brother with the brains, and must take care of Moigal, the CPU-controlled big brother.
The Hook: Highly unlikely to replace Sonic as the system mascot, but the *Of Mice and Men*-type gameplay may make this a unique standout title.

Furballs
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Bizarre Creations**
■ A cutesy platformer where you control wild animals with guns on a quest to rescue their parents. We're not making this up.
The Hook: Dreamcast can always use a unique character-driven platformer, and this one might appeal to a wide audience.

■ Release date: **Launch**

Armada

■ Publisher: **Metro 3D** ■ Developer: **Metropolis Digital**

→Dreamcast Launch Title

■ Team up with several of your friends to eradicate the alien scourge from the galaxy

Described by Metro3D as "an action role-playing game," *Armada* looks more like a space-shooter with some exploration elements. The game puts players at the helm of a large starship exploring an expansive universe, and, of course, engaging in war against aliens, researching new technologies, and earning different weapons and ships.

The game's main goal is to protect civilization by defeating the Armada, which, like *Star Trek*'s Borg, is a single-minded biomechanical entity that lives in the data banks of hordes of self-replicating ships.

The game can also be played cooperatively with up to four players at once.
The Hook: With *Geist Force* gone and all-but-forgotten, the cult of shooter fans may find what they've been looking for in this title.

Half-Life
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sierra** ■ Developer: **Valve**

■ While Sierra is being coy about *Half-Life* ("We're not sure if we want to do Dreamcast or PlayStation 2"), smart money is on this PC publisher going for this relatively easy port. *[PC screen]*
The Hook: *Half-Life* was one of the most popular PC games last year, and if the port is done right, it could repeat that success on Dreamcast, especially with multiplayer via Heat.net.

KISS Psycho Circus
■ Release date: **TBA**

NO GAME SCREEN
AVAILABLE

■ Publisher: **G.O.D.** ■ Developer: **Third Law Interactive**

■ Development on this KISS-inspired first-person shooter won't be concurrent with the PC version, but the team is planning to bring in a programmer to do a port at the end of the project.
The Hook: If the art of this Todd MacFarlane-inspired game from ex-Ion Storm coders impresses on PC, it should on Dreamcast, too — the release will be simultaneous.

Maken X
■ Release date: **TBA**
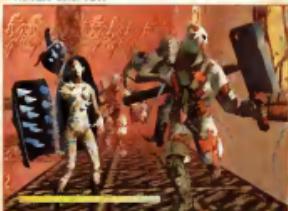
■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **Atlus**

■ This first-person shooter focuses on hand-to-hand combat (with otherworldly horrors) much more than your standard shooter does.
The Hook: We haven't been impressed by early demos of the game due to the general blandness of the environments. If this changes, the hand-to-hand aspect could be the twist to make this game stand out.

→ Dreamcast Launch Title

■ If blood, guts, and flying body parts are what you crave in a gun game, *HotD 2* will satisfy

PRESS START BUTTON
(CREDITS) 5

■ Release date: **Launch**

House of the Dead 2

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sega**

→ Sega's Model 3 shooter has everything that made the original an arcade hit and more — which is sort of a mixed blessing. There's no denying the game looks terrific, and there are a ton of branching pathways, giving it longer legs than most shooters. Also, the monsters and zombies this time around are a bit more vicious than before, which makes the whole thing a real challenge.

On the other hand, Sega is releasing this without a light gun — a mixture of economic concerns (adding a gun adds considerably to the cost) and, just as likely, political fear (no one wants to market a gun game after the Colorado school shootings) — which kinda puts a real damper on the whole exercise.
The Hook: With no gun, it's hard to even imagine playing this. Our review (page 84) has more details.

■ Strategy and planning are just as important as quick reflexes in this hyper-realistic anti-terrorist sim

■ Release date: **Launch**

Rainbow Six

■ Publisher: **Majesco** ■ Developer: **Red Storm**

→ This surprise PC hit brought home suspenseful special-forces missions, where one-hit kills were the rule, not the exception. Players must pick operatives and plan each team's attack pattern out before they enter each mission. Take control of each team and execute each maneuver precisely, or hostages could be killed.

Considering Majesco is saying this is a launch title, and it is still early in development, it will be interesting to see if it delivers more than the standard features. [PC screens]

The Hook: This PC port may or may not get a visual boost in its leap to Dreamcast, and unless there is multiplayer support for the modem, we'll be suspicious.

Max Payne
■ Release date: **TBA 2000**

■ Publisher: **Rockstar/G.O.D.** ■ Developer: **Remedy**

■ Not much is known about the port of this PC third-person adventure, but judging from the PC version, it will be dark and violent. As a framed and vengeance-bent undercover DEA agent, Max Payne, you explore a decaying New York City in an attempt to clear your name and bring down the drug lords. [PC screens]
The Hook: Consoles are the system of choice for third-person shooters, and if Remedy nails the control and camera when Max Payne comes to Dreamcast, this port may find a very welcoming audience.

MDK 2
■ Release date: **December 1999**

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Bioware**

■ More twisted levels, more dark environments, and more long-range sniper action in this follow-up to Shiny's 1997 cult classic.
The Hook: The first game was fun and Bioware (the team behind Baldur's Gate) is a triple-A developer. Hopefully, the game will be as playable as it is beautiful.

Rayman 2
■ Release date: **December 1999**

■ Publisher: **Ubi Soft** ■ Developer: **Ubi Soft**

■ This is a nicely detailed 3D platformer filled with the same sort of quirky humor that made the original Rayman a cult classic. [PC screens]
The Hook: 3D platformers are scarce on Dreamcast, but this one looks to be loads of fun and will no doubt satisfy.

Red Dog
■ Release date: **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer **Argonaut**

■ This cartoonish twin-combat game combines the action of *Twisted Metal* with the whimsical vehicle designs of *Tiny Tank*.
The Hook: Well, at least it's not a sequel to *Buck Bumble*. *Twisted Metal* and *Tiny Tank*! We'll believe it when we see it.

Shogo: Mobile Armor Division
■ Release date. **TBA**

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer **Monolith**

■ Whether or not this anime mech-shooter ever sees the light of day is debatable, but in its effort to port the Litetech engine to Dreamcast, *Shogo's* definitely been running on Dreamcast hardware. *(PC screen)*
The Hook: The critically acclaimed but unpopular *Shogo* is ultimately less important than the Litetech engine, which is starting to be used in several third-party games (most notably *KISS Psycho Circus*).

Soul Fighter
■ Release date: **September 1999**

■ Publisher **Piggyback** ■ Developer **Toka**

■ A medieval 3D beat-'em-up with a sword-wielding hero, hundreds of nameless foes, and "classic" 16-bit gameplay, vaguely updated with first-person projectiles.
The Hook: Best-case scenario: *Golden Axe* for Dreamcast. Worst case scenario: *Ninja*.

■ 🅐 **Dreamcast** Launch Title

■ Sega of America has been working closely with Sonic Team so that *Sonic* is in top form for the U.S. launch

■ Release date: **Launch**

Sonic Adventure

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Sonic Team**

Sega would have you believe that *Sonic Adventure* is its killer app. *Sonic's* first 3D outing is a load of fun, and it does feature some of the brightest and most insane graphics ever. With six playable characters, a hidden A-Life game with the VMU and some of the most incredible spectacles ever witnessed in the home, *Sonic* will no doubt impress prospective buyers. Unfortunately, the Japanese release suffered due to bad camera control, collision problems (Sonic had a tendency

to fall through walls), and general bugginess. All of the critiques that have been made have been taken to heart by the *Sonic* team, and they have spent the last nine months trying to quash all of the problems. Hopefully this will be the showcase Sega so desperately needs in its first-party stable, but until we see the American version, all we can do is cross our fingers.
The Hook: Sonic returns after years of exile: he's still fast, but if Sega of America doesn't shake the bugs out, this game won't be all it needs to be.

Star Trek: New Worlds
■ Release date: **December 1999**

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **14° East**

■ *Battlezone* meets *Star Trek* in this realtime strategy/vehicle shooter set in a three-way battle between the Federation, Klingons, and Romulans for control of a newly discovered planet. *[PC screen]*
The Hook: If *Star Trek* drags you in, the gameplay should keep you happy, but it's not clear if non-Trekkies will beam down.

Take the Bullet
■ Release date **TBA**

■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **Red Lemon**

■ A first-person shooter in which you play the bodyguard of a government official. You also get to issue orders in-game to your fellow men in black.
The Hook: A first-person shooter with some unique ideas! We're all for it — especially because the '70s graphical style looks cool, too.

Toy Commander
■ Release date: **Fall 1999**
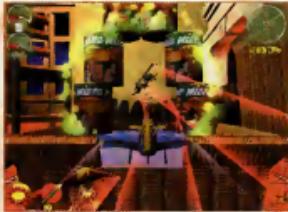
■ Publisher: **Sega** ■ Developer: **No Cliché**

■ Defeat your cuddly — and evil — teddy bear by taking command of various toys in your room in this *Army-Men-meets-Toy-Story* mission-based action/adventure.
The Hook: Who can resist the juxtaposition of kids' toys and explosive violence!

→ Dreamcast Launch Title

◀ A tight new physics model and sharp graphical style makes *TrickStyle* stand out from the wannabes

■ Release date: **Launch**

TrickStyle
■ Publisher: **Acclaim**　　　■ Developer: **Criterion**

Wipeout marked the PlayStation revolution, and *TrickStyle*'s antigravity street surfing may do the same for the Dreamcast launch. *TrickStyle* takes place in the year 2260 and features nine selectable characters from around the globe. Sporting a definite urban feel, racing on these hoverboards takes place in four metropolitan locales: London, New York, an ancient, uncovered city near Cairo, and a cloud city near Tokyo.

What separates *TrickStyle* from the uninspired 32-bit hoverboard games is its realistic physical modeling. The hoverboard moves with the kind of physical complexity one would expect if such technology existed, but even more than this, the riders react and move on their respective boards the way you might expect a real person would, aside from some very over-the-top aerobatical stunts, of course.

The crisply detailed environments and the smoothly modeled characters are eye candy for sure, and if Criterion's course design is equally adept, there's no doubt this one will be a keeper.
The Hook: The tricks of skateboarding with the panache of *Wipeout*, combined with sharp control and a sophisticated physics model, make this one to watch.

■ DMA is well known for its unique game designs, and *Wild Metal Country* is par for the course. Quirky vehicles and oddly non-traditional methods of mass destruction put this in a league of its own

■ Release date: **Launch**

Wild Metal Country

■ Publisher: **Rockstar Games** ■ Developer: **DMA Design**

This tank-combat game is coming over from PC, featuring massive environments and a fantastic physics engine. The number of tanks and types of terrain vary greatly, and the game even includes a number of flying-combat vehicles. DMA has also infused the game with its quirky, highly creative design. For example, players can lay down mines and then use a giant magnet to pull their opponents over them.

The Hook: Massively multiplayer online tank combat sounds tempting, but it remains to be seen whether all the online pieces will be in place by launch to bring this key PC feature to the Dreamcast version.

Unreal

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher **GT Interactive** ■ Developer **Epic Megagames**

■ Another PC groundbreaker rumored to have been running on Dreamcast from almost since the first dev kits went out the door. The rumor's source? Epic staffers. *[PC screen]*

The Hook: A gorgeous first-person shooter. If Epic can get the multiplayer version running online, this could be the game that brings cross-country deathmatches to your living room.

Vigilante 8: Second Offense

■ Release date: **Fall 1999**

■ Publisher **Activision** ■ Developer **Luxoflux**

■ Activision's signature car-combat series has earned millions of fans, and the Dreamcast version looks better than ever.

The Hook: The only game of its type on Dreamcast, the combination of hard-hitting action and '70s retro style should prove impossible to resist.

Zombie Revenge

■ Release date: TBA

■ Publisher **Sega** ■ Developer **Sega**

■ This Naomi game takes the beat-'em-up action of *Final Fight* and puts it in a *Resident Evil* scenario. Incredible graphics and the ability to use almost anything in the environment made this one a blast in the arcade.

The Hook: Arcade games don't necessarily always work at home, but if there are some added modes, this could be a fun diversion.

➤ Profile

In the tunnel: The entire Sonic Team. In the interview room: the team leaders

➤ No character has been more associated with Sega than Sonic the Hedgehog: he was there during the Genesis glory days, and he — notably — was missing during the dark days of Saturn. With Sega's new console comes the first Sonic game from the series' original creators since *Sonic and Knuckles*. Next Generation sat down with series creator and Executive Producer Yuji Naka and three other key members of the Sonic Team, Takashi Iizuka (director), Kazuyuki Hoshino (art director), and Tetsu Katano (lead programmer), to talk about Sonic, Dreamcast, and the future.

Next Generation: How do you think U.S. gamers will like *Sonic Adventure*?

Yuji Naka: This is the first Sonic game that has come out in a very long time — I hope gamers will be able to enjoy it in the same way that they used to.

Mr. Iizuka: What we wanted to do, and what we have done, is take the spirit of Sonic from the Genesis and bring it to the Dreamcast, where we're able to present a lot more details about Sonic's character, about the story, and about the world of Sonic.

NG: Are there many chan[ges in] the U.S. version?

Yuji Naka: There are n[o major] changes, no changes [...]

affect the feel of the game, but there are a lot of minor adjustments: we tuned up some parts, reviewed some camera angles, and rectified some bugs.

NG: How well does *Sonic Adventure* use Dreamcast's power? How much of Dreamcast's potential does it use?

Tetsu Katano: Thinking back to when it was being developed, the Sonic Team used 100% of the power that was available. But it was very, very difficult developing the game [without access to the final Dreamcast hardware].

Yuji Naka: Sega really wanted to get Sonic out at the launch of Dreamcast as a charac[ter]

that could symbolize the hardware. Now it's much later, and if we could draw more power from the system.

NG: We heard the Sonic Team split into groups . . .

Yuji Naka: There are lots of rumors. Sometimes I go on the Internet, and find so many rumors, I really have to laugh. Players want to have a sequel to *Sonic Adventure*, *Burning Rangers*, and *Nights*, so the rumor spreads on the Net that the Sonic Team split into three groups. I don't want to break

This is SONIC TEAM

people's dreams, but I am making none of these games!
Rumors are very interesting. . .

NG: So what is next for the Sonic Team?
Yuji Naka: It's a big secret! [Laughs.]

NG: What do you guys think about online gaming? Is the Sonic Team considering online?
Yuji Naka: We've been researching it. If it looks like we can do something fun, then we'll do it.

NG: What do you think the general information are concerning Japanese and U.S. gamers?
Kazuyuki Hoshino: American gamers really like challenges. If the game gets really difficult, they'll just keep trying. Another difference is whether they play by themselves or they play with others. Americans play a lot of games in groups, while Japanese just play games by themselves.

NG: What do you guys think of PSX 2?
Takashi Iizuka: The graphics are pretty good, but because it is coming out a year after the Dreamcast, of course it's going to be a bit advanced, so there are no surprises there. I probably won't be able to buy one — I'll have to have someone

buy it for me! [Laughs.]

NG: So you think it's going to be expensive in Japan?
Takashi Iizuka: Oh, yes. Right now, estimates are about $500. If it goes down to $200, which is unlikely, it will be a very good platform. But at $500, it won't.

NG: Do you guys want to talk a little bit about the character design in *Sonic Adventure!* It's a little different then in the old *Sonic* games. Sonic's a little more hip or something
Yuji Naka: The design change mainly is the 2D to 3D shift and just a conscious design change to make Sonic a little more updated.
Kazuyuki Hoshino: There was a conscious decision to change the character designs, yes. When Sonic was initially created, he was cool, irreverent, but as time

went on, perhaps due to Japanese merchandising strategies, he became cuter and his original head shape began to be lost. And for *Sonic Adventure*, since this was the first Sonic game in a while, we decided to bring back his true personality, and of course there were some revisions to his looks as well.

NG: Are we going to see any of the Sonic characters spin off into their own games?
Yuji Naka: I feel that the characters that I created are really good as supporting characters, and I'm not considering moving those characters to their own games.

NG: Who would win in a fight, Sonic or Crash Bandicoot?
Kazuyuki Hoshino: Probably Sonic, because Crash has a lot of "taking damage" animations. [Laughs.]

*Next*Gen

Yuji Naka

Takashi Iizuka

Kazuyuki Hoshino

Tetsu Katano

THE FIRST GO ANYWHERE

GRAB ANYTHING

FIGHTING GAME ON THE PLANET.

Welcome to the all-new, all-improved, all-knowing reviews section of **Next Generation**. Great writers who play games are a rare breed, but we think we've found a few. Read on...

■ Gather the power stones to unleash your inner fury — and some really nasty attacks

■ Dreamcast

Power Stone

Capcom takes fighting to a new dimension

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

No one holds a candle to Capcom in the 2D fighting-game arena, but in 3D it's been a whole different story. Until now. With *Power Stone*, Capcom has jettisoned all of its established 2D fighting-game conventions, creating one of the most unique and playable experiences we've seen.

At first glance, the gameplay is simple enough. You maneuver your character in a fully 3D arena, and, armed with punches, kicks, and

You can bounce off walls, kick a crate out behind you as you jump over it, roll across tables...

■ Sometimes, it's best to just try to get close so you can pummel your opponent hand-to-hand

The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even fair games are pretty good, we at Next Generation will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
★★★★☆ **Excellent**
★★★☆☆ **Good**
★★☆☆☆ **Fair**
★☆☆☆☆ **Bad**

■ Everything is interactive in the environment; becoming a master of *Power Stone* means knowing exactly what can be used in each level for maximum effect

Dynamite Deka 2

• Platform: Dreamcast
• Publisher: Sega
• Developer: Sega

■ The last of the Model 2 games, *Dynamite Deka 2* is still kind of fun, but it definitely shows its age

anything else you can pick up and use to your advantage, you do what comes naturally — pummel the heck out of your opponent. It's a pretty easy game to get the hang of initially, and beginners will probably get a kick out of the fact that this is one of the few fighting games immediately playable out of the box. After some play time, however, the true depth of the game's genius shines through.

The playability of *Power Stone* comes from the fact that your options are always open. You can bounce off walls, kick a crate out behind you as you jump over it, roll across tables, or even hang from the ceiling fan. Collect the three "power stones" littered around the environment and you upgrade your

comical, anime-style character into a supercharged version capable of much more damage for a limited time. Winning isn't based on memorizing controls: only learning how to use your moves and the environment together will form an effective fighting strategy. Simply put, there's nothing else quite like *Power Stone* anywhere — this is a

new standard in fighting game Zen, and reason enough to buy a Dreamcast. — Blake Fischer

Bottom Line: Every Dreamcast owner should have this title. It's unique, it's fast, and most importantly, it's loads of fun.

▶NextGen ★★★★★

Dynamite Deka 2 is the direct sequel to *Die Hard Arcade*, and hearkens back to the classic beat-'em-up days of *Final Fight* — the basic objective is to lock, punch, and combo opponents into oblivion, and then to move on to the next area.

It sounds mindless, and it is, but Sega's an old hand at this sort of game, and it's still pretty fun. The sequel's been expanded with a roster of three characters, each of whom have distinctively effective fighting styles, and the weapons have become pretty ridiculous, giving you the chance to assault enemies with anything from large fish to cruise missiles.

The trouble is that while the gameplay is solid, it looks extremely dated. *Dynamite Deka 2* in the arcades was one of the last Model 2-based games, and on a system where *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Power Stone*, and *House of the Dead 2* are handled with ease, *Dynamite Deka 2*'s Model 2 heritage betrays itself. Despite the slight upgrade in textures, the figures and environments are chunky and the FMV sequences only show how rushed this game must have been. — Jeff Chen

Bottom Line: An entertaining, if somewhat last-generation-looking, title.

▶NextGen ★★★☆☆

NOT WITHOUT MY VMU

Power Stone is not only one of the best launch titles to play, but it's also one of the few that uses the VMU for something more than just scoring. After you beat characters in the single-player mode, you unlock mini-games in your VMU. If you beat these games on the VMU, you then unlock even more secrets (such as bonus levels) in the game.

■ Pick up a weapon and watch your opponent flee in terror as you unleash ballistic death upon him

Expendable

- Platform: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Rage**
- Developer: **Rage**

■ Fancy lighting effects do not a good game make, as Expendable aptly demonstrates

→ *Expendable* is the kind of game that makes us, as reviewers, go home warm and happy. Why? Because by warning you against even coming near it in the store, we know we've done our good deed for the day.

This could be called "an old-style shooter," except that unlike a lot of old-style shooters, it's no fun at all. A shameful waste of technology, this "game" is loaded with pointlessly flashy special effects that actually obscure the action, sluggish control that makes lining up with targets nearly impossible, and poorly chosen camera angles that not only make it tough to see where some enemies are coming from, but even occasionally reverse themselves without warning.

In other words, be glad someone else was getting paid to play this for you, and pity him. — *Jeff Lundrigon*

Bottom Line: Stay away. Stay far, far away.

NextGen ★☆☆☆☆

Sega Bass Fishing

- Platform: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sega**

■ One of the best available games for a brand-new gaming system is — a fishing game! Well, in fact, yes

→ OK, OK, we know what you're thinking: how can a fishing game possibly rate this high? Well, um, because it does.

To begin with, while you'd expect a Dreamcast game to look good, *Sega Bass Fishing* looks great. The relatively modest

requirements of each environment (water, a boat, a fisherman, some fish) mean that each element can be rendered with a lot of polygons and highly detailed textures.

Second, this is a game that appeals on just about any level: It's incredibly easy to get into, and you can play for five minutes or five weeks. Jump into practice mode and throw a few casts, or enter competition mode and obsessively ferret out every hidden lure or secret fishing spot. There's also an "oh, I'll just go for one more cast" dynamic at work that makes it hard to put down.

And believe it or not, the fish really act like fish. It's often a true battle of wits to find just the right combination of lure, reel action, and even time of day and the right weather conditions to land the Big One. — *Jeff Lundrigon*

Bottom Line: Whether you're a true angler or just looking for a neat party game, buy this (and pick up a fishing controller while you're at it).

NextGen ★★★★☆

Shutokou Highway Battle

- Platform: **Dreamcast**
- Publisher: **Genki**
- Developer: **Genki**

■ Shutokou Highway Battle is street racing at its most ruthless — too bad there's only one street

→ Genki may not have developed the polished driving model of, say, a Sega or a Namco, but *Shutokou Highway Battle* is still pretty addictive (and arguably more accessible than *Sega Rally 2*).

The isn't about clean and flawless competition; this is street racing, in all its ruthlessness. You cruise a gigantic freeway circuit looking for a rival, then with a quick flash of the high beams the race is on — since you can choose where to make the challenge, the right area can help a weaker car win.

Still, the game's not without flaws: the driving model's good, but definitely not first rate, and while the environment looks a lot like Tokyo, one track, as large as it is, still isn't enough for an entire game. — *Jeff Chen*

Bottom Line: Not the greatest long-term play value, but the new wrinkles make it worth a look.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ In a demonstration of track AI programming, enemies leap straight at you — they do it fast, which is why it's dangerous, but that's the same as it ever was

■ Dreamcast

House of the Dead 2

- Publisher: **Sega**
- Developer: **Sega**

Undead fun for all — for about an hour...

→ If there's one genre that needs to evolve, it's the light-gun game. While the graphics have gotten better over the years (this has an impressively high resolution and 60fps framerate), the core gameplay of just running along on a rail shooting things hasn't changed since *Virtua Cop*.

In the *House of the Dead* series, zombies are the bad guys, and they pop up all around you, just waiting to be blasted into itty-bitty chunks of undead goo. It's an undeniably visceral experience, and there's enough blood and gore to make Wes Craven blanch. It's fun for a while, but that's all there is to it, and after playing a few times, you've seen all there is to see and done all there is to do. Multiple pathways only change the scenery a little, and the zombies aren't exactly creative with their attacks. Even the RPG additions to the "original mode" don't really add more than a few power-ups.

It also doesn't help that it's

hampered by questionable production values, like poorly animated characters and perfectly terrible voice acting. Sega isn't even releasing a gun with the game, which forces you to either play with the gamepad (not very fun) or spend more cash on a third-party peripheral. It's fun to watch, or even play for short periods of time, but it fails to hold your attention over the long term. — *Blake Fischer*

Bottom Line: Without the light gun, this game is a complete loss. With a gun, it's better, but not for very long.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

■ Still, if you like blasting zombies into bits (and who doesn't?) then go crazy — just don't expect weeks of play

A Bug's Life

- **Platform:** Nintendo 64
- **Publisher:** Activision
- **Developer:** Disney/Pixar Studios

■ Flik's inability to actually aim his shots makes even super berries ineffective against his enemies

➡ Like the terrible PlayStation version before it, A Bug's Life not only fails to live up to its license but can't even manage being a decent platform game on its own. Playing as Flik, the movie's hero, the game follows the plot of the film as you attempt to free your ant colony from the threat of Hopper and his evil grasshopper henchbugs.

Unfortunately, as a player, however, you never directly affect things, instead the majority of the levels consist of running from point A to point B, using seeds to gain power-ups, and chucking berries at other insects until they explode. You're then treated to a series of static, subtitled screens that vainly attempt to tie the story into the next round of bug bashing.

Fidgety controls and problematic camera angles make things hideously frustrating, especially for the younger crowd that the game's painfully simple goals and level designs seem geared toward. Although most of the graphics are adequately done and there are a few original levels, such as playing out Flik's dandelion ride, the fatally flawed interface and poor tie-in to the license will disappoint fans of both the genre and the movie. — Donel Erickson

Bottom line: Any way you slice it, this sucks.

➡ **NextGen** ★☆☆☆☆

World Driver Championship

- **Platform:** Nintendo 64
- **Publisher:** Midway
- **Developer:** Midway

■ Pick your lines carefully or the other drivers will force you off the road and out of the race

➡ An intense, harshly realistic ride, Midway's new racer immerses you completely in the world of GT racing. The championship mode is full of personalities and brings a new aspect of depth to console racing games. You take on the role of a fresh-faced driver just starting out in the world, looking for your first team and a car to drive to glory. Pick a team whose personality matches your own and start building up your ranking points so that someday the brass will trust you enough to let you race the awe-inspiring A-class cars.

World Driver's driving engine is brutal, unforgiving, and very realistic. Forget about ever powersliding through a turn at 90mph with the gas pedal to the floor — learning to intelligently brake and out-think the aggressive AI is a must. The tracks are pretty, and the cars look incredible, especially in fan-es mode. A great two-player mode adds even more depth to this simulation-style racer, stretching replay value to its absolute limit. There's even an arcade mode, although that certainly isn't the main draw here. — Donel Erickson

Bottom line: Arcade racing fans may find it too tough, but this is a must-buy for anyone who wants a realistic GT racing game.

➡ **NextGen** ★★★★☆

Duke Nukem: Zero Hour

■ Publisher **GT Interactive** ■ Developer **Eurocom**

Zero Fun is more like it...

➡ This is the game equivalent of an old buddy calling you from a bar; upon arrival you discover that all of the patrons are missing teeth, the waitresses have varicose veins, and your buddy needs a loan. Zero Hour keeps most of the Duke trappings (the wisecracks, the obvious sexual innuendo, and the strippers) intact — in fact it's surprisingly salacious for an N64 title — but don't let that pull you in.

The third-person perspective worked fine in Time to Kill for PlayStation, but the devil is in the details. Although Zero Hour uses the same analog stick for aiming and direction buttons for moving scheme as a lot of N64 games, the choppy, unpredictable framerates and sluggish response make hitting a target an exercise in frustration. On the other hand, since enemies are few and the pace is leisurely rather than action-packed, this isn't as big a problem as it could be (snort).

However, even if there's as much exploration as gunplay, the often tight spaces and odd camera angles make spotting a narrow side corridor as much a matter of luck as skill. Expect to spend a lot of time running over the same ground, wondering where to go next and what you could have possibly missed.

Worst of all, sometimes you're killed instantly because you've got no way to know that, for example, a car is going to scream around a corner and crush you dead until after it happens. Since the only time you can save is after completing an

■ Murky graphics and stilted animation further detract from a game already hampered by bad level design and a distinct lack of enemies

entire (long, tedious) level, this means slogging through the same level, over and over, until you get everything right. Abysmal. — Jeff Lundrigan

Bottom Line: Avoid this like radioactive bat droppings.

➡ **NextGen** ★☆☆☆☆

■ Yes, there's plenty of Duke's trademark sexism, but if you'll play this game just for a flash of butt, well my friend, there's no hope for you

■ One of the game's biggest draws is putting you right into the driver's seat of a bunch of famous chase scenes

Driver

■ Publisher: **GT Interactive** ■ Developer: **Reflections**

Live out your action-picture fantasies

A terrific game, *Driver* is one of a handful of racing games for movie fans, and the only one to really capture the feeling of a great Hollywood chase. Set in four cities — Miami, San Francisco, L.A., and New York —

the game puts you in the role of an undercover cop driving for the mob. Many missions echo classic scenes from movies: there's the garage scene from *The Driver*, the elevated subway chase from *The French Connection*, and, of course,

■ Replay options include the ability to place extra cameras, edit the sequence like a film, and save the whole thing to a memory card for later viewing

BULLITT: THE NEXT GEN CONNECTION

Filmed in 1968 and set in San Francisco, *Bullitt* starred Steve McQueen as Frank Bullitt, a stoic cop tracking a pair of mob assassins. In one of the most famous car chases in movie history, Bullitt chases the killers through the city, ending on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway, where he forces them off the road into a gas station, which explodes in a huge fireball.

So what does this have to do with NG? The location where the gas station stood in the film is the exact spot where Next Generation has its offices today. No kidding.

the full-tilt roar down the steep streets of San Francisco from *Bullitt*.

It's a beauty, too, with high framerates, a great sense of speed, smooth control (we'd recommend an analog controller, by the way), and lots of bells and whistles. In addition to the story mode, there are a number of cool mini-games, like an escape mode where you see how fast you can lose the cops, or a survival mode where relentless cops crash into you and you just try to last as long as you can.

There are some small problems: the civilian cars seem deliberately

programmed just to get in your way (pulling into the right lane to make a left turn — a lot — or changing lanes constantly for no reason), and the cops have this supernatural ability to set up road blocks instantly. In other words, some of the challenge is a bit artificial.

But if you're a fan of white-knuckle driving action, look no further.   — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: A movie buff's dream — but *Driver* is still great even if you aren't big on movies.

NextGen ★★★★☆

■ The added driving games are fun in themselves, challenging you to drive on dirt or survive an onslaught of supercops — the office record in San Francisco is a minute and a half

Castrol Honda Superbike Racing

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
- Developer: **Interactive Ent.**

■ There's speed in *Castrol Honda Superbike*, but little else

→ EA has given us some pretty good bike-racing sims — *Moto Racer 2* and *Road Rash* come to mind — but *Castrol Honda Superbike* doesn't add much to EA's cachet. If you're looking for a wide variety of racing bikes in all shapes and sizes, you've come to the wrong game. Like the name says, this is *Castrol Honda Superbike* time. You can tinker with gear ratios, adjust the drive sprocket, and even change tire compounds, but when you're done, it's still a Castrol Honda RC45.

Still, it's not all bad. Lots of high-velocity wind-in-the-face racing is on tap: practice runs, training sessions, single-race events, and a full championship series. You can race on the Castrol Honda team, go against the field, or compete head-to-head with a friend via split screen. It's good for a few hours.

But there's also a lot of "average" here. Frame rates aren't sluggish, but they don't zip, either. You get 14 tracks in 11 international locales, but the scenery is too drab to be appealing. Overall, there's just too little to love.   — *John Lee*

Bottom Line: You might learn a bit about bike racing, but after you've zipped around the same track a dozen or so times, this is just plain dull.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Centipede

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Hasbro/Atari**
- Developer: **Realsports**

■ As Buckner and Garcia sang, "Centipede, you can't run away" But he could look better, if you could manage to play in the close-in mode

→ *Centipede* demonstrates one thing for sure — Hasbro has come a long way since 1997's *Frogger*. *Centipede* offers both an emulated version of the original arcade classic and an updated 3D adventure mode, complete with animated cut scenes.

So how is it? The emulation on Midway's *Atari Classic* pack was better, but it's clear that the emphasis here is on the updated adventure mode, where you play a cute Smurf-like creature who must defend a series of villages, homes, and comrades from centipedes, fleas, scorpions, and other nasties.

The adventure mode is a 3D shooter with 23 levels across four different worlds. It's well done, and we especially liked the classic touches: the original one-up sound remains, and successive centipedes are released with more heads and less body. The shooting levels are well designed and varied, and the difficulty ramps well.

Our only real complaint with the 3D game is that while it looks OK in the close-in views, it's only really playable in the far-less-pretty zoomed-out view. Also, the cut scenes were a little cloying — Hasbro clearly intends this to skew young.   — *Chris Charla*

Bottom line: A solid 3D shooter with a nice, if young, story makes this a great game for your little brother, but don't be surprised if you find yourself playing a few games, too.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Jade Cocoon

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Crave**
- Developer: **Genki**

■ An RPG in which you don't really care about the characters is doomed to failure, whatever its high points

→ *Jade Cocoon* has a few interesting wrinkles for an RPG, incorporating a trendy monster-breeding feature as well as side quests and numerous endings, but that doesn't mean it's a good game.

As a "Cocoon Master," your main power is the ability to capture enemy monsters. With the help of Mahbu, your young mystic bride, you can merge monsters together, combining their powers and appearance. And apparently, this is the meat of the game, you can pit your monsters against another player's in

arena mode, or hunt in a randomly generated forest for creatures not available in the main game — think of it as a mellowborne fix for *Monster Rancher* fans in withdrawal.

If you're looking for a decent RPG, though, you're gonna be disappointed. There are so many side quests that the main story seems fragmented and downright puzzling at times. Although there's a very complicated mythology behind it all, nothing really means anything, and the characters don't generate much empathy. Worse, you wind up going through the exact same four areas twice, and it takes all of 19 hours to beat.   — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: Mediocre monster-breeding sim plus mediocre RPG ... snore.....

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Konami Arcade Classics

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Developer: **Konami**
- Publisher: **Konami**

■ Konami didn't include any historical info with the games, but that doesn't detract from this excellent collection

→ Finally. We've been jonesing for good versions of Konami's classics ever since the classic packs from Midway, Atari, and Namco first came out. Trust us, the wait was worth it: The disc delivers the goods. Not only is the emulation near-perfect, but the interface is simple and the loading times are non-existent.

But the real appeal is the games: *Pooyan*, *Scramble*, *Yie-Ar Kung Fu*, *Roc'n Rope*, *Shao-Lin's Road*, *Circus Charlie*, *Super Cobra*, *Road Fighter*, *Gyrus*, and *Time Pilot*. If you don't recall at least three or four from that list fondly, you may not have been alive during the eighties. Our only real complaint: analog support for *Gyrus* and *Time Pilot* would have been appreciated. The control is fine now, but being able to use a stick would have made it better   — *Chris Charla*

Bottom Line: They were fun then, they're fun now, and with 10 games included, the package is an excellent deal.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

R-Type Delta

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **Agetec**
- Developer: **Irem**

■ In *R-Type Delta*, enemies elegantly encircle you as you blow them back to hell

→ If you dropped any quarters into '80s arcade shooters, you probably remember *R-Type* as one of the best of the lot. Irem has given the game a polygonal makeover and added '90s-era lighting effects, but the game still plays on a scrolling 2D plane.

Like the original, *R-Type Delta* pits you against swarms of aliens with the help of evolving force modules (AI-assisted combat power-ups) that link to the player's ship or fly independently. Players pilot their craft through seven dramatically different stages, blasting everything that moves. This becomes monotonous only when, after running out of continue credits, you have to start over, which actually happens a lot — like the original, this is one difficult game. The continues are linked to a time/lock system, and more continues are unlocked only after a certain number of hours of play.

To add variety, *R-Type* gives players the option of choosing among three ships, and each has a weapon system distinct enough to keep the game from growing stale. The environments are more detailed than *Einhänder*'s, but admittedly lack that game's zingy effects. The control is as you'd expect, and the music and sound effects rival the quality graphics.   — *Tom Russo*

Bottom Line: Overall, a fantastic looking effort, but proof that the gameplay limits of this genre will soon relegate all 2D shooters to classic collections.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Star Ocean

- Platform: **PlayStation**
- Publisher: **SCEA**
- Developer: **Enix/Tri-Art**

→ In the explosion of RPGs that have hit PlayStation lately, *Star Ocean: The Second Story* manages to stand out in a number of ways — but not all of them are good.

On the up side, although there's only one basic storyline, you get two different

■ Star Ocean isn't the best RPG you'll ever play, but if you can stay awake long enough, it's far from the worst

perspectives: you can play as Claude, a newbie in the Earth Federation space corps who "accidentally" winds up on a troubled low-tech planet, Expel, or you can play as Rena, the native girl who befriends him. Although the characters are sprites and most of the backgrounds are pre-rendered 2D, everything looks quite nice indeed. And finally, in the game's most notable and interesting feature, the combat occurs in 3D and in realtime, and you have the option of

playing them as action sequences. It's not *Final Fight*, but it was a nice touch.

However, realtime action sequences notwithstanding, the overall pace is crushingly slow. It takes forever for the story to get moving, and the dialogue is constantly interrupted by characters giving off emoticons to show they're surprised, or embarrassed, or whatever. The translation, while competent, is as bland as you can imagine, and the story is predictable to the point of

boredom. Even stranger, when playing as Rena, you actually spend time waiting around to be rescued by Claude — a very weird thing in today's era of tough videogame chicks. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

Bottom Line: It has its pluses and minuses, but they balance out to one of the most average RPGs you can imagine.

■ NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ Online
Sanctum: Oppositions

■ Publisher **Digital Addiction**   ■ Developer **Digital Addiction**

There's no *Magic* to this online card game's success

For all of you who have experienced the sweaty palms, the hoarded nickels and dimes, and the inevitable disillusionment of the collectible-card-game frenzy, many of the basic ideas behind Digital Addiction's online-only strategy game will seem readily apparent. But to dismiss *Sanctum Oppositions* as a mere *Magic: The Gathering* takeoff would be to deny yourself the chance to experience a game that is both highly original and deeply rewarding.

The cards in *Oppositions* are of the virtual kind, existing only on your hard drive, but that doesn't stop them from boasting a stunning variety of truly beautiful artwork. Hundreds of individual cards — no two are alike — ensure a new visual experience every time you load the game. What separates the game from a simple collectible-card game, however, is that the cards are used only as support spells and modifiers for the actual troops you recruit from Sanctums, or bases. The game is then played out on a randomly

generated tile-based battlefield instead of using the cards themselves as a game.

There are twelve houses of magic for players to choose among, each house having appropriate creatures and cards that are representative of their particular type of magic Hope, War, Life, Despair, Making, etc. Most of the cards also work equally well as complements to houses with similar themes (it's easy, for example, to place a Life card into your Hope deck, but working a Death card into your Nature deck is problematic), making each player's deck distinct and unpredictable.

All of the individual troops have portraits that dynamically reflect any spells cast upon them, and summoned monsters are beautifully represented by 3D animated pieces on the board. Each of the characters and creatures have distinct movements and animations, and even the separate tiles on the board can be clicked on for

descriptions of the terrain, sound effects, and crisply drawn pictures.

Perhaps the most welcome thing about *Oppositions*, however, is its accessibility. Getting into the game is a snap. A free copy of the game and a starter pack can be downloaded from Digital Addiction's web site at www.digitaladdiction.com, and playtime is unlimited. If you purchase twenty dollars' worth of cards, though, you become a ranked player, eligible for trading, tournaments, and ranked games against opponents of your own skill level. Sweetening the deal, an easy-to-follow tutorial and an intricate ranking system make finding an opponent of the same skill level a good bet, day or night. — *Daniel Erickson*

Bottom Line: A terrific and addictive online strategy game.

■ NextGen ★★★★☆

■ The artwork is stunningly good, but that's not the draw here — the game features a nifty combination of compulsive collectibility and online strategy

■ One part *Magic: The Gathering*, one part turn-based strategy, *Sanctum* has "addictive" written all over it

■ The Mech cockpit gives you a great view of the battle

New Home, Familiar Face

⇨ The king of mechanized behemoths is back, this time from a new address. And when the smoke clears and the last mangled enemy machine is carted off to that great junkpile up yonder, *MechWarrior 3* will still be standing tall. About 50 feet tall.

Once a product of Activision, the battling behemoths now come from MicroProse, and *MechWarrior 3* is a worthy successor to the two earlier versions that should keep Mech pilots eagerly engaged until the mission packs start rolling out.

You can choose from a single-player campaign with 20 missions, jump into one of several instant-action scenarios, or join your friends for BattleMech melees via LAN or

modem. Enter the cockpit of a 100-ton Annihilator (18 cool Mech chassis are available, as well as an arsenal of armor and weapons) and you can slug it out head to head, blow up structures to run rabble on your enemy, or take cover behind hills and walls and use an nifty zoom feature to snipe from a distance.

The graphics and sound are top-grade. Lasers scream. Rockets streak across lakes, grassland, and rolling hills, leaving trails of smoke as they zero in on the enemy. You'll hear the thud of heavy footfalls as you navigate, feel the jarring shake when you take hits, and curse the shattered cockpit glass that obscures your view. When you walk through a village, you'll see people

■ Among the great new features is a slick zoom device that enables easy aiming over a distance, without hiding the HUD display

You'll hear the "Eeyahh!" of tiny voices as bodies fall under the massive feet of your BattleMech

HISTORY OF THE MECH...

MechWarrior 3, the latest entry in one of the more successful giant-robot franchises (more than $200 million in worldwide sales), has a history almost as tangled as the backstory of the Mech clans. Based on a series of FASA board games and more than 40 *BattleTech* sci-fi novels, the giant assault Mechs made the move to computer gaming under the guidance of Activision.

Activision did a fine job. *MechWarrior 1* and *2* were killer games. But the FASA Corp., owner of the books and board games, reclaimed the franchise and tried to launch its own interactive gaming wing. FASA designers quickly discovered the job of building a superior computer game was too complex, so they put *MechWarrior 3* in the hands of Zipper Interactive and MicroProse. Smart move.

scurrying to get out of the way. If you're in a crisis situation and haven't time to step around them (no player would stomp little people on purpose, right?), you'll hear the "Eeyahh!" of tiny voices as bodies fall under your massive feet.

The cockpit is a roomy place, with an excellent heads-up display. Every bit of information you need is at your nose tip: heat management, weapon selection, radar, enemy location and range, plus damage to both you and your foes. Other friendly Mechs, called Lancemates, will do what you tell them and save

your bacon when you're in trouble.

The numerous keyboard controls may seem complex at the start, but there's a good set of tutorials, and a few defeats will make you pay attention and learn fast. Be sure to play this one with a joystick since it dramatically increases your odds of survival. And although the game claims to play without 3D acceleration, you're much better off with it. Great stuff.
— John Lee

Bottom Line: Sorry, guys. Size *does* matter.

⇨ **NextGen** ★★★★☆

■ PC

Unreal Tournament

■ Publisher: GT Interactive ■ Developer: Epic Megagames
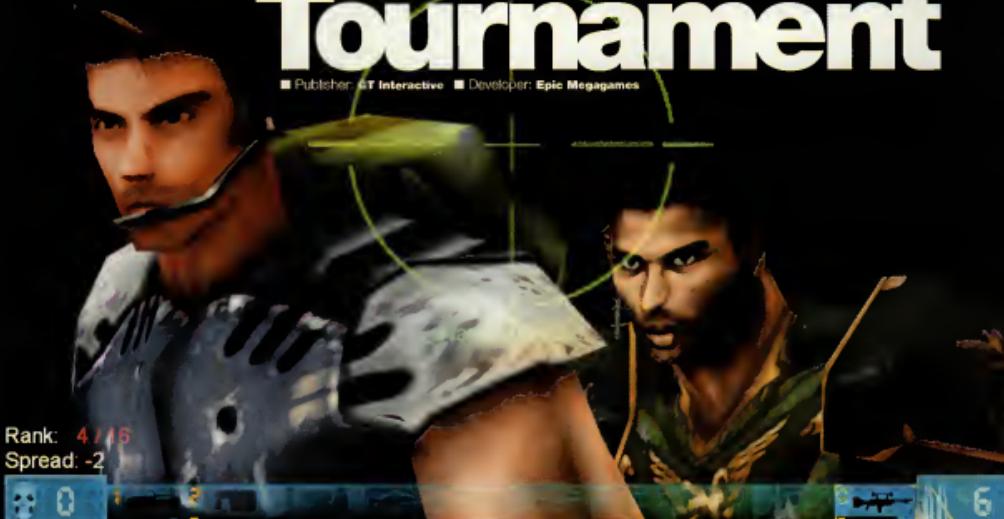
Rank: 4 / 15
Spread: -2

Epic ushers in the first single-player multiplayer experience

■ Many of the original *Unreal* weapons have been given overhauls or rethinks, including a rocket you can steer and the *de rigueur* sniper scope

→ Online multiplayer was once looked upon as a phenomenon beyond practical technology. Yet somehow, over just three years, multiplayer has become one of the most prominent and entertaining modes of gaming.

Unfortunately, while we've all been playing, casual gamers have been scratching their heads, confused by terms like "ping-time"

■ Another multiplayer mode is domination mode, in which teams fight to control territorial markers — it's pretty frenetic, since the score can flip-flop at any time

and "*mlook*." In context, it's understandable that the online gaming revolution has become separated from casual gaming. And with recent embarrassments like the success of *Deer Hunter*, it's obvious most casual players don't even know what they're missing.

With *Unreal Tournament*, Epic is pushing toward the ultimate goal of attracting new fans to the genre, by making this optimized-for-multiplayer FPS as easy to use and accessible as, well, *Deer Hunter*. But it also needs to keep a hardcore interest afloat to secure as large an audience as possible. It's a tightrope to walk — and even a slightly uphill one, thanks to the overall poor multiplayer code in the original *Unreal*

For the rookies, every facet of the game (and thus, first-person multiplayer shooters in general) is explained through tutorials. Although

these provide a comfortable welcome mat, it's disappointing that more advanced maneuvers like circle strafing and positional tactics are left for gamers to absorb on their own. Following this, you'll face

If you're wondering where your skills need work, every statistic is recorded for review afterwards

off against one or more bots toward a specified kill goal. Similar to a ladder system, victory at one stage promotes you to more challenging ground. If you're wondering where your skills need work, every

conceivable statistic is recorded for review afterwards.

In this, the largest obstacle to self-improvement has been remedied. Rather than immediately jumping online to sink or swim amongst experienced competition, new players can spar against the bots at any skill level they choose. Even more refined than in the previous *Unreal*, the bots make reasonably human-like aiming and tactical mistakes on easy levels, then dish out a methodical reaming at higher levels. If the score becomes one-sided, the bots can dynamically adjust their abilities accordingly. If you want a more personalized experience, you can select their favorite weapon, alertness, and combat style. This and many other configurations, although still able to be modified through console

A BETTER CLASS OF GAMES

Alongside the standard deathmatch and capture-the-flag modes are domination and assault modes. Both of these new modes are worthy additions:

Domination requires you to claim positional markers. As you retain these key territories, they contribute to your score as time passes. Unlike CTF, as markers change hands, each team's location of strength often squirrels from one place to the next throughout the game.

Assault is a race against the clock where each team is delegated to offense or defense. Pitting the attackers against insurmountable odds, the strategy is usually to distract or decoy while key destinations are reached. This presents endless opportunities for creativity, including a terrific Omaha Beach scenario.

■ The different environments are as varied as the modes of gameplay, just to keep you from getting bored 'n' all...

commands, are also accessible through user-friendly menus.

Because they constitute the bulk of the single-player experience, there is a lot of pressure on bots to perform realistically. They can be as easy or as difficult as you want them to be. Yet in both extremes, the strategies you'll use to defeat them still feel terribly artificial and condone tactical idiosyncrasies that aren't

effective against true human opponents. This is readily apparent in mixed games with both human and bot opponents. However, it has to be said that even after noting these differences, bots still command a frenzied pace of play. Adding a few lag-free bots to team matches opens a style of frantic gaming previously unavailable to modern users. And with the addition of domination and assault modes, both of which are more entertaining than the aging capture-the-flag formula, *Unreal Tournament* is a certified winner for team multiplayer.

However, in comparison to other shooters, death comes quickly. At least half a dozen weapons are one-shot kills. Even acquiring the new power shield won't keep you alive for long if you aren't careful. And the

melee-attacking impact hammer seems a simpleton's toy — just keep it activated and any contact with another player will typically prove fatal. All this potency certainly levels the playing field, but it won't be well accepted by the stalwart *Quake* community. Fortunately, the game setup is flexible enough that any weapons you find particularly annoying can be removed from play.

Powering all this is the newest revision of the *Unreal* engine, sporting all the graphical whirligigs we'd expect. Visual quality loses no marks here. Level design is also to be commended, from the small-but-open deathmatch levels to a beach-storming team level.

Altogether, this title is an ideal introduction to the online arena for the rookie, and a well-executed multiplayer game for the rest of us. The harbinger of an entirely new style of gameplay this is not, but with the amazing number of options for different play styles, *Unreal Tournament* is excellent entertainment.   — Buck DeFore

However, in comparison to other first-person shooters, death comes quickly

■ Don't worry, folks: It doesn't hurt a bit (it's not real, after all), and the game's single-player training modes will help make you a better online opponent

Bottom Line: Epic rolls all its eggs into the deathmatch basket and comes out with an evolutionary gem sure to please.

→ **NextGen** ★★★★☆

■ Thanks to the improved networking code (it's much better this time around), the action is as fast and furious as you could hope for

Jeff Gordon XS Racing

- Platform: **PC**
- Publisher: **ASC Games**
- Developer: **Real Sports**

■ The only thing faster than the cars in XS Racing is how quickly the whole game gets old

→ The latest from ASC, XS Racing takes stock-car racing into the future with complete loops, turbo boosters, and self-repairing cars. Created under the guidance of Jeff Gordon himself, the game boasts six futuristic cars, ten brutally short tracks, and cars with extendable wings that enable you to steer mid-jump while catching incredible air. Graphically, however, XS falls flat. The 3D-accelerated graphics are adequate but sparsely detailed, and the software mode is too ugly to be playable.

If you can look past the bland visuals, though, there is a solid racing engine here. More than 20 cars can be racing onscreen with no slowdown; the cars race at a very believable 300mph; and although the first few tracks are uninspired in their design, some of the later ones are truly breathtaking. The Gambler features two-way traffic, multiple paths, and hidden power-ups, while the jumps in Drop Zone are some of the best in the genre. The novelty wears off a little, though, when you have to race each track for 10 to 20 laps — that's fine for a sim, but this is an arcade game. Worse, there's no multiplayer mode, which is inexcusable in a PC racing title. — Daniel Erickson

Bottom Line: Gordon's #1 on the track, but this well conceived yet repetitive effort lands squarely toward the back of the pack.

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Might & Magic VII: For Blood and Honor

- Platform: **PC**
- Publisher: **3DO**
- Developer: **New World Computing**

■ In the post-Baldur's Gate era, there's no room for (and little interest in) a non-innovator like Might & Magic VII

→ The simple fact is that RPG fans have begun to think of 2000 A.D. as year 1 A.B.G. — After Baldur's Gate. Baldur's Gate shattered expectations and raised the bar for all RPGs that will follow, and, living in the shadow of this magnificent game, Might and Magic VII looks shabbily old-school.

The game is uncannily like Might and Magic VI, which was admittedly great in its day, but for the series to stand still while the genre has taken a giant leap forward is ultimately its undoing. Despite a few graphical tweaks and some amusing additions — you can become the lord of an estate and own a castle, for example — the game never breaks its own mold.

Might & Magic has always relied on an epic feel created by level after level of outdoor areas followed by dungeon upon dungeon. Sure enough, Might & Magic VII is enormous, and many of its levels look quite different: those of previous installments, but the whole thing feels more like a long exercise than a compelling game. The NPCs are lifeless and the quests are nearly at trips to the zoo (go here, do that, come back). Frankly, we would have traded some saw for a little innovation. — Aaron John Loeb

Bottom Line: If you have a burning hunger for a new RPG, Might and Magic VII offers a fine quick fix, but you don't get anything more than you'd expect.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Re-Volt

- Platform: **PC**
- Publisher: **Acclaim Ent.**
- Developer: **Acclaim Studios**

■ Re-Volt offers gamers the chance to recapture a bit of youth with radio-controlled car racing

→ With Re-Volt, Acclaim has taken an approach that's a cross between Micro Machines and Mario Kart, putting you in control of bread-boxsized radio-controlled (RC) cars in a hostile life-sized environment — back yards, sidewalks, construction sites, and toy stores. The cars actually control very much like their real-world counterparts, offering too much power and not enough traction. Spin-outs, over-corrected corners, and banging into objects are common

Graphically, the game is outstanding. Cars look fantastic, the environments are stunning, and the effects are perfect. But as great as it looks, the gameplay is only average, failing to capture the excitement of real RC racing. Half the fun in RC racing is upmping and ramming other cars, and while there's a bit of this in Re-Volt, the game doesn't take it to the level

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Star Wars Episode I:
The Phantom Menace

■ Publisher: **LucasArts**   ■ Developer: **Big Ape Productions**

Watch the movie, play the movie

■ You get the chance to talk with different characters, although it doesn't affect things much

→ This is from the same team as the Super NES classic Zombies Ate My Neighbors, so it should come as no surprise to find it's a scrolling shoot-'em-up. You control one of four characters; Queen Amidala, Captain Panaka, Qui Gon, or Obi-Wan, although you'll be one of the latter two for most of the game. Based loosely on the plot of the movie, it's padded out by levels based on what happened when characters were offscreen.

Episode I isn't bad, it's just that PC audiences don't often cotton to console-style shooters. LucasArts is gambling that the Star Wars license is enough to make it sell, and for a scrolling shooter, this is a pretty ambitious effort.

The plot is moved by interaction with characters from the film, but most of the gameplay involves platform-style challenges like shooting, exploration, and jumping. Using a lightsaber is necessary, and like a Jedi you can deflect incoming laser fire with deft movement of the blade.

Graphically, Phantom Menace is sharp, if not inspired. Sad, since part of the inspiration for this title was to show off the

■ Even if Episode I relies too heavily on its license to really shine in its gameplay, that doesn't make it all bad

movie's sets. Still, the visuals are perked up by explosions, reflections, and integrated cut scenes, and the overall scale is massive (there're 12 very large levels). — Frank O'Connor

Bottom Line: A decent challenge, decently made. Just don't expect Jedi Knight.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

■ PC
Need For Speed: High Stakes

■ Publisher **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer **Electronic Arts**

This series has never had so much under the hood

In every *Need For Speed* game, one thing stays the same: the thrill of driving a wish list of authentic cars over realistic highways, and *High Stakes* is no exception. Although it hits many of the same potholes as its predecessors, racing fans looking for depth, speed, and responsiveness will have little reason to complain.

Admittedly, *High Stakes* doesn't add as much to the series as last year's feature-laden charm, *Hot Pursuit*. Yet *High Stakes* has accumulated a sexy rack of fully loaded attributes: improved graphics, Internet multiplayer, and best of all, the ability to race against the local smokey.

While *Hot Pursuit* laid down the foundations of strong 3D support, it pales next to the beauty of *High Stakes*. All 19 tracks are detailed in the extreme. The dream cars are painstakingly modeled, from the Ferraris to the new

■ This is simply the coolest *Need for Speed* ever. It's as realistic and fast as the series has ever been able to boast

Porsches, and unlike the bumper cars in *Gran Turismo*, damage is realistically depicted, from a busted headlight to a collapsed roof.

These beasts drive almost as fine as they look. Rain and gravel realistically affect traction, but collision detection remains a weakness for the series, and suspensions don't react as visibly as in *Gran Turismo*. On the whole, though, the race is beautifully done: from the smoke swirls off the start to the dust kicked up when a car runs along the shoulder, it's even fun to watch.

Of course, the name of the game is *High Stakes*, and for good reason. In certain tournaments, you'll be putting your title of ownership on the line, and to the victor go the spoils — you will forfeit your car if you lose. It's not as ground-breaking as last year's "Hot Pursuit" mode, but in fairness, Electronic Arts has put a new spin on this as well, enabling you to play as either the cops or the pursued — great for multiplayer chases. There's also a career mode, in which tournament winnings are applied to upgrades or new cars. There are some small problems, like the inability to configure weather effects or to alter your car color outside career mode, but nothing crippling. — *Buck DeFore*

Bottom Line: Greater than the sum of its parts, *High Stakes* has fun where it counts — in spades.

◨**Next**Gen ★★★★☆

■ Running from the cops is just part of the fun. You can also race against other players for pink slips — lose the race, and you lose your car

that real RC cars get subjected to Acclaim Studios has included weapons (similar to those in *Mario Kart*), but we would have liked to see more. Don't get us wrong, what's here is fun, but it could have been better. — *Rick Sanchez*

Bottom Line: It's a fun romp, but if it had taken its toy inspiration over the top, this could have been excellent. Maybe in *Re-Volt 2*. . .

◨**Next**Gen ★★★☆☆

Star Trek The Next Generation: Birth of the Federation

■ Platform **PC** ■ Publisher **Hasbro Interactive** ■ Developer **Microprose**

■ The graphic engine has a great look, but even they get boring after the 300th time you see them

At first glance, *Birth of the Federation* is magic. Roddenberry's world fits perfectly into a turn-based strategy game (based on the *Master of Orion II* engine), combining exploration, conquest, and war-time diplomacy. Taking control of one of five groups (Federation, Klingons, Ferengi, Romulans, or Cardassians), your success depends on maintaining the values of that culture — nothing is worse than a penniless Ferengi, and if you play as such, you'll quickly lose planets to unhappy revolutionaries. Authentic music, tactical starship combat, and customized interfaces for the different races all bring a sense of depth.

Unfortunately, as soon as the thrill of being immersed in the *Star Trek* universe is over, you come to realize that the game itself is not much fun. The pace is slow, the tactical screen is nondescript, and the only real difference between turn 15 and turn 380 is how long it takes you to finish moving your ships and complete the increasingly tedious task of updating all of your planets' facilities — not much else happens. Eventually you realize that most of the racial differences are merely cosmetic. Once you've seen all the pretty window dressing, there's just not much point. — *Daniel Erickson*

Bottom Line: A wonderful look at the *Star Trek* universe, but the actual game is sleep-inducing.

◨**Next**Gen ★★☆☆☆

August 1985

What was happening during the calm before the Nintendo storm?

By September of 1985, the console crash was complete — Atari was practically dead, Intellivision was mortally wounded, and Coleco's failed ADAM computer was dragging the company into insolvency.

Nintendo, then just a two-man operation in New York, was having trouble getting retailers to return its calls, never mind agreeing to distribute the system.

But despite the console crash, there were still games: while they took a definite hit, the Apple II, Commodore 64, and Atari home computer markets were all going strong — classics like *Karateka* and *A Mind Forever Voyaging* were released in the autumn of 1985.

In fact, one of the best installments of the Ultima series, *Ultima IV: Quest for the Avatar*, was released in September of 1985 by Origin. The game has the distinction of being the first RPG in which role-playing is actually important. In the game, you need to discover and embody all the virtues of the Avatar; in short, you need to act good. If you don't, you can't complete the game until you repair the damage that your evil actions have caused. **Next**Gen

■ The fourth *Ultima* may have been the biggest leap since the series began: decisions you made actually mattered

Karateka
Complete Strategy Guide

4 games you can type in yourself!

Ultima arrives IV
The full review inside, plus an interview with Lord British

Telnet
Better than a BBS?

A Mind Forever Voyaging
Another interactive fiction masterpiece arrives

PLUS: Is Nintendo the next Atari?

What we were playing

Consoles were dead, but Apple and Commodore ruled

■ KARATEKA
■ System: Apple II
■ Publisher: Broderbund
■ Developer: Jordan Mechner

■ MARBLE MADNESS
■ System: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Mark Cerny

■ ELITE
■ System: C64
■ Publisher: Firebird
■ Developer: David Braben

■ DAWN PATROL
■ System: C64
■ Publisher: Mark of the Unicorn
■ Developer: Scott Baggs

■ GHOSTBUSTERS
■ System: Apple II/C64
■ Publisher: Activision
■ Developer: Activision

Top 10 songs of '85

1 Can't Fight This Feeling / REO Speedwagon
2 Shout / Tears For Fears
3 Broken Wings / Mr. Mister
4 Power Of Love / Huey Lewis & The News
5 We Built This City / Starship
6 St. Elmo's Fire / John Parr
7 Miami Vice Theme / Jan Hammer
8 Oh Sheila / Ready For The World
9 Lovertoy / Billy Ocean
10 The Heat Is On / Glenn Frey

■ Taking it on the run in 1985

...and in the real world

■ Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos' call for elections catches his rivals off-guard. They frantically try to unite behind one candidate to challenge him. The most likely candidate? Corazon Aquino, the widow of Marcos' former chief opponent.

■ Microsoft releases the Windows operating system. Version 1.0 provides a graphical interface for IBM-compatible computers . . . barely.

■ Terrorism takes front stage in the news with the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Beirut and Lebanon and the hijacking of TWA Flight 847.

■ *Miami Vice*, starring Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas as "Tubbs," hits it big, spawning a pastel-colored tuxedo trend the nation has yet to fully recover from.

■ "New Coke" fails; Coca-Cola reintroduces "Coke Classic."

Letter rip: cutting edge correspondence, biting response

→ In NG 55, Electronic Arts VP Bing Gordon stated that Dreamcast would fail without the support of EA. It seems to me that Dreamcast already has an impressive sports lineup, with or without the support of EA. Is EA really that powerful a company?

William Fleming
logicino@earthlink.net

Well, EA would certainly like to think so. The fact is, EA is the largest third-party publisher in the world, and it controls some of the most popular properties around — Madden, NFL, Need for Speed, Command and Conquer, Ultima, Jane's, Populous, and SimCity, just to name a few. So, yes, the lack of support by EA remains a major, major problem for Sega. That said, there doesn't seem to be a huge shortage of quality games for Dreamcast right now, and Nintendo 64 survived without early EA support.

→ I am very disappointed with the moron that wrote the Star Wars: Racer review. First of all, I would like to point out that I am NOT an avid Star Wars fan. The reviewer said that it relies too much on its license. Of course it does. That is why even non-Star Wars fans rent/buy it. Finally, in the last instance of the review, the reviewer mentioned that if it wasn't a Star Wars game, it wouldn't stand out. That's bull. Sure, there are two other fast racing games out for the system (Wipeout 64 and Extreme G), but neither of them match up to the playability of this excellent game. I suggest you make the reviewer sit and play the game that he thought "sits squarely in the middle of the pack" non-stop until he changes his mind.

mycompro1@hotmail.com

Right. Look, it's a good, fun game — that's what a ★★★ review means, but it's no Wipeout. The Tatooine track is awesome and really captures the feeling of the movie, but beyond that the tracks are too long and the gameplay is simply too dull to deserve an "excellent" or "revolutionary" rating.

→ Alright... help me out here. I saw a link on Next Generation Online that mentioned "problems with the Issue 54 disc." You are joking, right? I subscribed to NG a few issues before you started the disc, and after about a year or so you got rid of it, and I was deeply disappointed. Now, you're telling there's a disc again?! Clear this up... quickly.

Mick Wierenga
mwember@ameritech.net

Occasionally, an advertiser pays us to bundle a disc with the magazine, which is what the disc that came with NG 54 was. It wasn't an editorial product like the old NG disc.

→ Why does everyone like the idea of Sega Dreamcast so much anyway? The system is almost an exact copy of PlayStation. The only difference is it says Dreamcast on it with a fancy little swirly thing at the top.

Ryan Domeij
ryanexytj@hotmail.com

You know, you're right, Ryan. Just like all those "books" they sell that are exact copies of each other, except they say different things on the cover. Oh yeah, and the inside contents are totally different. For that matter, PlayStation seems to us an awful lot like an exact copy of a salad

spinner, since you can put a CD in both and make it go round and round.

→ OK, let's settle this for the last time: Genesis had a 3-button controller with a start button. And the system did not ship with two controllers but one.

Michael Siwik
MonkeyBoyX@hotmail.com

→ In NG 55, there was a letter from someone who stated that the Sega Genesis did not ship with two controllers. I was one of the first people to own a Sega Genesis, which I ordered out of an electronics catalog. Any real Sega fan would know that the original Sega Genesis did ship with two controllers, and it even included the classic game Altered Beast.

Robert Settle
xgollothx@hotmail.com

Robert, meet Michael. Michael, meet Robert. Both your email addresses have been printed. You guys go fight it out — the rest of us have more important things to worry about, like who had the

original idea for Asteroids, Lyle Rains or Ed Logg. For the record, the editor-in-chief's Genesis came with one controller and Altered Beast, cost $150, and came with a coupon for a free copy of Sonic.

→ I just started reading your mag, found it to be informative. If possible, I would like to see a comparison article between VM Labs' Nuon chip and Sony's Emotion Engine.

DaBaur@email.msn.com

Unfortunately, it's not possible — VM Labs and Motorola haven't released enough of their specs to do a comparison. However, both companies say their chips can do realtime MPEG-2 (DVD level) decoding in realtime. There is some speculation that the VM Labs' media processor uses a unique computing architecture different from the I.A.S.-type architecture that has characterized all computers since the ENIAC, but again, we've had no confirmation from Motorola or VM Labs about this.

→ In NG 50, you showed a preview of a game that was to be put out by Namco called Dragon Valor. Ever since I read that article, I have been anticipating any information on the release and the game itself. I have been searching all over for a possible date of U.S. release. I know the release in Japan was meant to be in spring 1999, but is there going to be a U.S. release? If so, when will it be? Keep up the good work.

Jon Openshaw
andirefusetobeaman@yahoo.com

Although Namco showed a fantastic-looking video of the game at E3, the company hasn't announced its plans for the title in the U.S. The game has been delayed in Japan and is still quite early in development. We've been following the title closely, as soon as we have any more information about it, we'll let you know.

■ **DRAGON VALOR**

Why does everyone like the idea of Sega Dreamcast anyway? The system is almost an exact copy of PlayStation

After fully reading **NG 55**, something really bothered me in the letters section: the second letter was so stupid, how could this person question buying a Dreamcast, obviously this person is not well informed about Dreamcast games. Look, I've always hated Sega and I love Sony, but what people have to understand is that Sega doesn't make all the Dreamcast games. Other companies like Capcom, Konami, and Climax are making some good-ass games, all of Dreamcast's RPGs look good as hell, there's *Grandia 2*, *Buldur's Gate*, *Elemental Gimmick Gear*, and even Sega now is making a game which hopefully will be what *Zelda 64* was to Nintendo, that game is *Shenmue*, and Dreamcast's worst RPG, *Evolution*, is still looking good, and won't ever be as crappy as *Quest 64*. Now, the adventure games are awesome — there's *Castlevania Resurrection*, *D2*, and Capcom's *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*, and we all know *Resident Evil* games rock, then there's sports games *NFL Quarterback Club 2000*, *MLB 2000*, *NBA 2000*, *NHL 2000*, and some other Sega-developed sports games. What about fighting games? There's Capcom's fun game *Power Stone*, and Namco's beautiful *Soul Calibur*. So by now I hope you all got my point: Sega's Dreamcast has a variety of awesome games for every genre to keep gamers stuck to their TV for most of the day. So please people, stop thinking about Sega's past and start thinking about its present and its future.

Jeff
mid104@yahoo.com

We couldn't have said it better ourselves.

Your "Building the Future" article in NG55 is excellent. It brings to light a way in which small developers might be able to survive the increasingly-difficult-to-develop-for console hardware. The one factor which the article fails to address is the cost of the engines (be they physics, 3D rendering, etc). What are basic differences in cost between building one's own engine and licensing one?

pomme@concentric.net

Licensing a well-known 3D engine can cost in the realm of $250,000 to $1,000,000 or more (plus royalties), depending on the

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As I was reading the July issue of *Next Generation* (NG 55), I noticed a few errors on page 72. Under "the modular approach," you said that *Half-Life* uses the *Quake II* engine. If I'm not mistaken, Valve licensed the *Quake* engine — not the *Quake II* engine. I checked NG 52, and on page 78, Gabe Newell was talking about *Half-Life* using the *Quake* engine. You made the same mistake in NG 50 on page 94.

Nick Kochakian
nickk@worldnet.att.net

We spoke to our favorite Sierra representative about this and she told us the following: "Half-Life uses some Quake technology, some Quake II technology, and a lot of Valve-developed technology." The Judges have ruled that this doesn't count as an editorial error, and so the editors in question will not have their tongues torn out.

HALF LIFE

engine and the level of support the engine-maker will provide. In some instances, you can freely download the engine, paying only when you want to use the engine commercially. Doing your own engine can cost as much or more before you even start the game.

I've been very disappointed in you lately I take my gaming very seriously and grounding the horrible offending editor (who can't get simple facts about a game right) doesn't seem to cut it. If you can't hurt any of these evil-doers because of your policy, will you at least send them to me, and rest assured, I will carry out justice.

masteroyrax@yahoo.com

You've got a point, so we rounded up all the editors (well, interns, actually — see below) who had previously been grounded or sent to bed without supper for making errors, flayed their backs with electrical cords, bound them hand and foot, and tossed them off Año Nuevo point here in Northern California. The sharks are well that day.

Recently, I have noticed that many editors in your magazine have suffered fatal accidents that have caused them to disappear I was wondering: where do you get editors to fill those menial seats?

INUxYASHA@aol.com

One word: interns.

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Note: email is vastly, vastly preferred

BackwardsCompatible

We're famous. Well, our office is. Learn about **Next Gen's** Hollywood car-chase connection on page 86. **Is this the first-ever instance of Yiddish slang in a game magazine? Next Gen goes multicultural on page 37.** A scientific explanation for why people eat, um, dirt is on page 43. Connection to gaming? Tenuous. **The review that improbably features the phrase "a flash of butt"** *and* **the phrase "zero fun" is on page 85.** Written on the Fourth of July. No kidding. Page 28. **Trust us — any game that can make "Nocturne" stop playing** *EverQuest* **must be good. See page 82 for details.** Overheard in Golden Gate Park: "Wow, they're taking pictures of us outside. We're going to look like American developers." The results are on page 78. **To get the maximum points in** *Pac-Man***, you need to eat all the dots, all the powerpills, and all four ghosts every time you eat a powerpill, with your first guy, on 256 levels. In 10** *billion* **points of** *Pac-Man***, it's been done once.** Find out who the dedicated gamer was on page 12. Oh yeah, did we mention that he retired from *Pac-Man* playing the moment the six-hour-long game was done? **Or that his best friend and coach holds the record for** *Ms. Pac-Man***?** Or that he didn't eat during two straight days of unsuccessful attempts? **The box-out on page 66 required both mad algebra skills and an exchange of email with an actual government official in the Department of Commerce.** Buy Nigel Edge a beer, mate, he's finally been published. Page 33. **The game that made everyone in the office frantically clamor for "pad" this month is reviewed on page 86.** It was true then, it's true now. Page 3 features copy we plagiarized straight out of **NG** 1. **And your single best chance to get your twitching hands on a free Dreamcast is on page 53.**

NextMonth **Perfect Dark**

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